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"The Story of our Lives from Year to Year."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A Weekly Journal.

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

v. 74

THIRD SERIES.

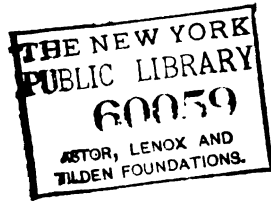
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THE EXTRA SPRING NUMBER FOR 1894,

ALSO

THE EXTRA SUMMER NUMBER FOR 1894,

WILL BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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CHARLES DICKENS.

NO. 262.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1894. PRICE TWOPENCE.

MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "The Power of the Past," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I. LOST ON THE FELL.

"I SUPPOSE" said Philip Gillbanks, addressing a labourer sauntering out of a wayside field gate, "that I can easily get to Meretown if I go over this hill?"

The labourer, as he crossed the road, barely took the trouble to look at his questioner, but jerking his head in an upward direction replied:

"Ay, straight oop."

Philip smiled at the laconic answer of "straight oop." The direction was at all events easy, but when he began to ascend, his mind full of his own affairs, he found the climb stiffer than he had anticipated. It had been a fine morning, but now the day was passing away and the sun was setting behind a high range of mountains. The clouds were forming themselves into long lines of crimson and grey, whilst a low bank of dove-like grey filled the space between two near peaks, looking like a couch of down prepared to receive the weary Phœbus. As the May day faded into evening Philip Gillbanks found his steep climb becoming tiresome. The loose stones he displaced on the steep incline rolled down far below him, and the mountain bed of a stream which he was following was decidedly an unpleasant path.

"The man said 'straight oop,'" he thought, "but surely, when I consulted my guide-book it seemed to indicate that I ought to take an easterly direction; I should say

that the natives of this valley have made a vow to use no superfluous words. I must get to Meretown this evening."

Then Philip left his torrent bed and made for the eastern ridge above him. Soon after he was delighted to find a path a foot wide. This he thought must be the right track, so he followed it till he noticed that it narrowed perceptibly, and suddenly vanished, not into thin air, but into short turf and oozy bog, and he saw it no more.

"'Straight oop,'" he repeated, and suddenly finding that he was still some distance from the highest ridge, he climbed straight ahead only to find that the top was a huge rock, and that above it rose other hills intercepted by miniature valleys.

"This is the fell," said Philip, and he stood still to watch the sun dip behind the beautiful line of hills and mountains far away in the west. "And now which way is 'straight oop,' for it seems a series of zigzags?"

To climb each hillock was merely adding a descent to his labours, so Philip tried to round them, getting himself occasionally in a cul-de-sac. Sometimes a bleating sheep with her attendant lamb started up and ran away affrighted; then a hawk sailed slowly by, as if half asleep on the wing, for Nature appeared to retire early to rest in these lonely uplands.

Philip was now decidedly puzzled as to which course he should now pursue. His knapsack was heavy and his day's walk had been long; worse than this, the light was fading quickly. The grey clouds increased tenfold and spread themselves rapidly over the sky, apparently regretting that the dale folk had enjoyed a long, fine day. In half an hour everything about the sky denoted rain, and a chill wind began to moan along the hillocks.

Now and then Philip struck into a small sheep path, each time feeling sure that at last he had found the right track leading to Meretown, for that one existed he was certain; but after five minutes of self-congratulation on his part the path seemed to make a farewell bend into nothingness, leaving the lonely traveller to seek for another. Philip Gillbanks had never been in this country before, and though he was at first amused at the idea of having lost himself, he came at last to the conclusion that this was really the case. It was now too dark to find any path at all, whether true or false, and in a few moments the clouds seemed to come down bodily, enveloping the whole range of desolate hills and dales in one great mantle of mist. To make matters better, Philip Gillbanks discovered that he was at the edge of a swampy bog, so common in these regions, and so annoying to pedestrians who are racing with daylight. Here and there were tiny stagnant ponds of inky-looking water, near to which black clumps of peat were heaped about in wild confusion.

Philip Gillbanks was travelling a few days in this mountainous district in order to get rest and refreshment. At this moment he repented having ventured as far as this desolate region in order to obtain what could certainly have been as well enjoyed on level ground.

An hour later, having splashed through a new bog in a very undignified manner and found himself at last on firmer ground, he sank down to rest upon a collection of rocky boulders. He was completely spent, and the torrents of rain which wetted him to the skin seemed as nothing to the great enveloping white mist now preventing him from seeing many feet ahead.

"Well," he thought, "I must own that I'm lost, so I may as well remain where I am as go on wandering round these never-ending fells. It seems preposterous, but these rocky hills are very awkward bits of climbing, and in this fog, if I tried to descend, I should most likely find myself with a broken leg at the bottom of a gully. Why on earth didn't I keep to the high-road? Sooner or later I must have come upon some farmhouse where I could have been taken in."

He put on his mackintosh, then crouching under a great grey rock, he tried to shelter himself as much as was possible under the circumstances. A hot supper and a soft bed seemed tantalising visions, for

he was certainly both hungry and weary. Still, Philip Gillbanks could always make the best of every misfortune. He had a great deal of staying power and more patience than often falls to the lot of a modern young man.

"I wanted time for reflection, and certainly I have got it now," he thought, still able to smile at his unpleasant position.

Philip was at this moment in a very unsettled state of mind. His father wanted him to follow in his footsteps and to enter the business which, under the elder Gillbanks, had acquired fame and money. Philip had just finished a creditable college career, and something in his nature revolted against money-getting, and for the last few days he had been trying to solve the problem of his future career. Should he devote his life to patent boiler-screws, or to something more after his own heart?

The rain fell in a steady, persistent manner, and Philip Gillbanks's feelings became decidedly the reverse of cheerful. He tried to enliven them by thinking of his college friend, Forster Bethune; if he had been with him this small adventure would have been merely a laughing matter, but the loneliness of these miles of fell added to his general depression. It was like an emblem of his present life, in which nothing was clear, except perhaps the advisability of giving himself up to patent boiler-screws, and foregoing all ideas of a more romantic life. Business men should avoid romance as much as possible, it does not agree with profit and loss. Philip had no right to inherit a strong dose of it. It was this knowledge that shook his faith in heredity, for by nature he had almost as much romance in him as had Forster Bethune, his college friend. This man was Philip's ideal of perfection; he was so strongly original in his views, that he could see no distinction of rank or wealth. Possessing both himself, he was the only true Radical Philip had as yet encountered. He had a creed that "all men are equal," and acted up to it. It was at times a very inconvenient creed, and Philip saw that his own father, who had raised himself entirely by his genius and his industry, laughed at the idea of comparing himself or of being compared with his own workmen. Forster, on the contrary, who was related to some of the bluest blood in the land, could not see why this should entitle him to any more regard from his fellow-men than if he had been born in a workhouse.

At the beginning of their friendship Philip had one day remarked that there could be but very little in common between the Bethunes and the Gillbanks, and at this moment Philip smiled again at the recollection of the wrath he had called down upon himself.

"Look here, Gillbanks, if you ever say such a thing as that to me again our friendship ends. I don't care a straw who your people are or what they are. I liked you and I think you liked me from the first. We met here as Freshmen; you have to put up with my odd ways, and I shall have to put up with your want of sense in liking me. I don't make friends easily, but I like you. If you swear to respect my prejudices I will do the same by yours, but don't let me hear of rank and all that sort of rubbish. There is much to do in the world, and we have to prepare for the work as best we can. I didn't want to come to college, because men think too highly of a college education, but my father insisted on it, so here I am."

Gillbanks's friendship for Forster was a subject of remark among the other Freshmen, but that did not stop it. Their college life was now over. Forster had passed a brilliant examination in everything; he had eclipsed Philip, but when they parted Forster's last words were:

"I'm coming to Moorchester in a fortnight. I must go home first to receive the parental blessing. My advice to you, Philip, is, take a few days' walking tour and sweep away all recollection of these narrow-minded dons, and when I come we'll settle plans for the future."

"Oh, mine will be patent boiler-screws," Philip said, sighing and laughing at the same time.

"I don't know; we must consult. Suppose your father accepted me in your stead? There's a great deal to be made out of screws. You can get hold of your men by working with them."

Philip laughed aloud.

"You should hear my father on that subject! He ought to know, and he has no belief in getting hold of men."

Forster's fine pale face looked extremely grave.

"It's no laughing matter. You see, Philip, one's elders don't know; they think they do, and they try to stifle our ideas, but we must be cautious. My father is all wrong, too. He thinks a man who isn't a gentleman by birth can't be expected to act the same as one who is.

This is merely the remains of serfdom and prejudice. We must think for ourselves. Go and commune with Nature, Philip, then all will come clear."

Philip had taken his friend's advice, and here he was alone, but unpleasantly alone, with Nature. To spend the night on the desolate fell, enveloped in mist in lieu of a blanket, is not conducive to pleasing meditation.

"I wish I had waited for Forster, though the chances are he would not have rested here, but he would have wandered about till he fell over one of these treacherous rocks."

Thoughts of Forster beguiled the time, but did not cure Philip's hunger, nor did they dry his now saturated garments. At last he jumped up, and determined to do something more exciting than to sit still under a rock. If he had to walk up and down all night in this narrow upland valley, it would certainly be better than to sow the seeds of future rheumatism.

To beguile the time he tried to think of Forster's views on various subjects, for Forster's views were never dull, and usually they were so surprising as to give ample food for reflection; but in spite of himself, Philip's mind strayed back to the inevitable chop he had eaten in the morning at the "Greendale Valley Inn." He would find no fault with it now, could he order its twin brother. He felt numbed and stiff; the mist filled his eyes, and the rain dripping from his hat made rivulets down his back.

Suddenly a lamb started from its mother's side. Its bleating broke the desolate stillness, but better still, it was followed by a long, low whistle and the bark of a shepherd's dog. Philip's spirits rose at once and he shouted lustily. There must be a shepherd close at hand with the dog, for these hardy men often wandered all night on the fells, especially if they had lost a sheep, or if it were lambing time.

There was no answer to his call, and Philip again shouted through the mist.

"Hi! Here! Is any one here? Hi! These folk of laconic speech are as likely as not to go their own way," he thought; but he was mistaken, for in another moment the blurred outline of a shepherd stood suddenly before him. The figure seemed to come from nowhere, thus adding to the mystery of the place. Philip at once made known his wants.

"My good fellow, I've lost my way. I was walking across these fells to Mere-

town, and a labourer down below told me to go straight up, and here I am."

"Meretown," was the answer, as if spoken enquiringly.

"Yes, Meretown, just the other side of this never-ending fell. I was afraid to proceed in this mist and darkness."

"You shud hev minded the path," was the short comfort afforded to the lost traveller.

"That was my stupidity, I suppose, but indeed I never saw it."

"Leuk back noo and I'll show you," said the shepherd.

"I want to get on, my good man," said Philip, brushing the drops from before his eyes and speaking a little impatiently.

"D'ye nut mind, then, about Meretown? It's a goodish step from here. Ye be in the wrong path noo."

"I do mind about getting shelter and supper, but where I get that I don't much care—the sooner the better. Perhaps there is a farmhouse in these parts?"

"Farm! Bless your sowl, there's nowt but the Palace between here and Meretown."

The Palace was, of course, the name of a public, and Philip accepted this offer of bed and board with alacrity.

"I shall be extremely glad if you will show me the way to it, my good fellow."

"I can show you the way, sartin sure, boot——"

"I can pay my night's lodging," said Philip, mistaking the shepherd's meaning.

"I dare say you can, boot——"

"But what?" said Philip impatiently.

"Boot the King's got a crank against strangers."

"The King?" Was this shepherd an idiot?

"Ay!"

"But I can't stay here even if the Palace won't give me a night's shelter."

"I kent saw; the King moight, and he moight not."

"Legally he can't refuse to take in a bonâ-fide traveller," said Philip, forgetting he was dealing with a peasant.

"What kind o' traveller did you saw?"

"An honest man. My good fellow, if we go on talking here much longer I shall be frozen to death."

"That's not uncommon in the winter, sartin sure, boot—the King's got a will of his awn; howsoever, noo I'll tak' you to him."

Philip was not in a mood to argue; he was very weary, very wet, and very

hungry, and though he could have knocked the fellow down for talking such rubbish he considered that it was not to his advantage to do so. For a while he now followed his companion in silence, and indeed to follow at all required all his small remaining stock of energy. After crossing a stretch of rocky ground, the guide ascended another hill, at the summit of which he stood still.

"If it war clear, you cud see right doon into the valley fra here," he said; "the Palace is doon yonder. This is the most shut in kind of glen in the country. Yur not flaysum, be you?"

"I'll follow you," said Philip, hardly understanding the vocabulary.

"It's a bit steep but shorter. This 'ere mountain is Fettishon and kind o' shuts in the Rothery glen. Toorist gents never coom our way; they never find the Rothery."

"Then the Palace is out of the beaten track?" said Philip, still a little uncertain as to what kind of shelter he was being taken to.

"The King doan't like strangers, no more does the Dook."

"The Duke must be another inn," thought Philip. But what on earth did they exist for if not for strangers?

His guide, however, now turned suddenly down a sharp ridge covered with slate and loose stones, which the least touch of the shepherd's wooden shoes sent flying down below into the misty depth.

Presently the guide paused again and remarked:

"You can scramble a bit?"

"Oh, yes; but it's so wet and dark I can't see my footing."

"It's a foin country, this 'ere, for hills. Ah'll show you two foin rocks for climbing. This one'll shorten the way, and the King's made a bit of a path at the bottom through the deep part of the dale. Boot alone I wudna advise it. There's danger of falling into the Rothery, and if you did no one would be a bit wiser."

"I'd rather not," said Philip, smiling to himself.

"Sartin sure. Now, just swing yourself doon."

Philip was not a great mountaineer, and he now found himself expected to climb down the face of an almost perpendicular and rocky hill. Here and there were tiny ledges where the foot could rest a moment, and where one could take breath for the next scramble. Philip was too proud to

own that he was not much pleased with his path, but he allowed the shepherd to take his knapsack, and then he followed him as best he could, regardless of the mud which he meditated must be sadly spoiling the only suit he possessed. Neither was he much reconciled to his situation by hearing the roar of one of the many mountain streams, which after rain become raging torrents, and which, as was here the case, have in past times cut themselves a deep bed through passes of solid rock.

However, "all's well that ends well," and at last Philip jumped down-upon what he felt to be, for he could not see, a path placed on level ground.

"Here is the King's path," said the shepherd. "He's often said to me, 'Jim Oldcorn, nature has made my natural boundaries, and I'd rayder have the ague than a lot of them strangers aboot the place.'"

"This good man is not particularly fond of his fellow-creatures, then?" remarked Philip.

"Sartin sure," was the answer.

"I think I'd better walk on to Mere-town in that case."

"If the stimmelock's empty, victuals is agreeable, sir, and I tak' it that's your condition. It so happens the Dook's at home, and he's particularly civil; but the King" — here the shepherd laughed — "he's not one of your narvish sort as thinks of consequences. If he war to find a stranger here, he'd as loik as not send him into the Rothery and not help him out of it again, that's sartin sure."

"And yet travellers must come here pretty often, unless this is the best road of approach, in which case——"

"It's no' so bad, sir, for one as niver's been oot of the country; but Lord! there's another on to the high-road, only the King has put bards oop, as like snarley dogs as possible, to warn 'em off."

Philip was more and more puzzled, and was going to make another remark when his companion silenced him.

"It's best not to speak lood, for the King, as loik as not, moight be firing at us. There's no telling when he's oot or in. Best keep quoft."

all, and not even of the dignity of a quarter day, yet perhaps all the more for that it continues to grow in popularity as a festival even to the depreciation of Christmas. The latter is a casket of old memories often too sad to be encouraging, while there is something of hope anyhow in the prospect of a new year. And with all the changes of styles and calendars, and the intrusion of other beginnings of years, legal, ecclesiastical, or financial, it has always been the first of January that has come victorious out of the competition as the real undoubted New Year's Day.

Thus it was in the Roman calendar, and visits were paid and presents exchanged among the fine people in old Rome, just as to-day in Paris, where the shops are all gay with New Year's gifts, and a universal fair seems to be held in the streets and boulevards. With us devotion seems to take the place of pleasure. We stick to our ledgers, we deal out gold and notes over bank counters, but we have rousing watch-night services on New Year's Eve. If anybody would open St. Paul's Cathedral on that occasion, it would be crammed; as it is, people crowd about the churchyard and wish each other a good time as the bell tolls out the midnight hour.

It is from Scotland doubtless that we have been inoculated with this gregarious way of letting in the New Year. For wherever Scotia's sons are to be found, they are pretty sure to be busy in letting in the New Year, which has always been a favoured festival in Scotland, since dour John Knox put Christmas out of fashion, although we may suspect that French influence has had something to do with the matter. And to Scottish engineers and sea captains is probably due the general recognition of the New Year by the great British mercantile steam navy. "The numerous steamers anchored in our port," wrote a French journalist from Rouen, "have saluted the commencement of the year 1880 in the English manner. At midnight a piercing carillon of all the ships' bells made itself heard and lasted during a quarter of an hour. It is the second time that this usage has been practised at Rouen." Since then the usage has made the tour of the world. It is a tintinnabulation that runs all round the globe, and is heard in nearly every harbour in the world.

In former days it was the capital of

NOTABLE NEW YEAR'S DAYS.

ALTHOUGH New Year's Day may be alighted by some as only an affair of almanacks, commemorative of nothing at

Scotland that led the way in the joyous celebration of the New Year. As midnight struck on New Year's Eve the streets of Auld Reekie would be more thronged than at midday, while the lowering fronts of the old gabled, overhanging houses, the wynds and dark courts, and flights of steps that seemed to lead into the abyss, would be flecked with moving lights; and the windows would shine out with a joyous glow, and all the passers-by would exchange hearty greetings. But on one notable New Year's Eve, of 1812, a band of young apprentices conspired to scour the streets and knock down and rob all whom they found on their way. "This," writes Walter Scott, "they executed with such spirit on the last night of the year, that two men have died and several others are dangerously ill from the wanton treatment they received. The watchword of these young heroes when they met with resistance was 'Mar him,' a word of dire import." Three of the lads, all under eighteen years of age, suffered the penalty of death for their share in this outrage, although their youth and penitence excited the deepest compassion. And altogether this luckless affair brought the celebration, at all events in Edinburgh, into some disrepute.

But the children still remember New Year's Eve as Hogmanay:

The cottage bairns sing blythe and gay
At the ha' door for Hogmanay.

And at Abbotsford in Sir Walter's time they each got a penny and an oaten cake. On the other side of the water, on the Norman seaboard, the children, too, sing at people's doors and shout "Aguinette," a phrase which has puzzled all the antiquaries, but which has probably a close relationship to Hogmanay.

As for New Year's gifts in general, they seem to be in origin as old as the calendar itself. The lawyers under the Roman codes fostered and preserved these pleasant perquisites amid the shock of falling empires. And under the old French régime every one who had a procès—and that meant every person of condition—made it a point to pay a New Year's visit to the judges in the cause, and delicately leave behind a suitable number of gold pieces. The same custom was fostered by English lawyers, but purists might reject the presents, as Sir Thomas More, who, when a lady visitor sent him a pair of gloves with forty gold pieces inside, was content to take the

gloves but refused the lining. But presents from subordinate officials to their chiefs were accepted, and even expected by the most scrupulous. The monarch, too, looked for New Year's gifts as marks of loyalty from the high nobility, and these gifts were of considerable amount in Elizabeth's reign, but dwindled to very little under the Stuarts.

In the French Court of old it was different. There the great function was the "Rois," our Twelfth Day, when, in imitation of the Magi, whom the feast is supposed to commemorate, the French nobles brought rich gifts to their King. The "Rois" is still in high favour among Norman peasants as a day of continual feasting; but the old observances, with the election of king or queen, according to the chance allotment of the bean in the cake, seem everywhere to have gone out of use.

The Revolution it was that brought New Year's Day to the front, that French Revolution that threatened to abolish it altogether. The Republican Calendar does not acknowledge such a day. You may search the months Ventose and Pluviose in vain for any recognition of the Jour de l'An. But the first of January, 1806, witnessed the triumph of New Year's Day with the restoration of the Gregorian Calendar, and a general reversion to things as they were before the revolutionary deluge. And with the Empire the day assumed a place of its own among the brilliant festivals of a Court where everything was gaudy, bright, and new.

Still there were notable New Year's Days before that epoch. Suppose we stand ghostlike behind the chair of state at Seone, where, on the first of January, 1626, sits Charles the First, enthroned on his Coronation Day, bringing to mind the ghostly pageant witnessed by Macbeth:

Some I see

That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry.

Then, witnessing the great nobles and fair dames of Scotland at his feet, we may look forward to another New Year's Day spent sadly and alone at Windsor in 1649. The King, a captive and deserted by all, now gazes from the windows of his palace prison, and far away on the horizon he may see the pinnacles of the sombre pile at Westminster, where his Parliament that very day had voted his virtual sentence of death.

Just a hundred and one years ago, on New Year's Day in 1793, another King and prisoner, Louis the Sixteenth, was await-

ing his doom at the hands of a hostile Convention. His prison was in the cold vaulted chamber of the old donjon of the Templars, and here he spent the last days of his long anguish, separated from wife, children, friends, in the view of hostile and mocking sansculottes. "On the first of January on his awakening," writes Lamartine, "Clery, his faithful valet, approached his master's bed and offered him, in a low voice, his good wishes for a happy end to his misfortunes. The King received those wishes with emotion, and lifted his eyes to heaven in recalling the days when such homage, whispered to-day in low murmurs by the sole companion of his dungeon, resounded as the voice of a whole people through the magnificent galleries of Versailles."

Again, with the brilliant receptions of the great Emperor, surrounded by his victorious marshals, and receiving the congratulations of subject princes, we may contrast the New Year's Day at Elba, in 1815—the tiny court, the band of broken exiles! Yet there was a great though secret gathering of the braves of the old army that day about their idolised chief, and the cloud soon burst upon Europe in the lurid tempest of the Hundred Days. In England on the same day people were enjoying the first days of peace. Some were reading the "Glaour," others Scott's new poem, while a few of the élite were expanding over Wordsworth's "Excursion," and a new novel by the author of Waverley was coming out forthwith. And no one dreamt of the glory and slaughter of Waterloo.

After the shock of arms the arts come in again. But New Year's Days of a notable kind are few and far between. On New Year's Day, 1821, Macready is playing in "Virginius." On New Year's Day, 1824, Flaxman, the sculptor, gives a dinner-party, when Sir John and Lady Franklin are guests, poor Sir John so soon to spend a last New Year's Day among the terrible icy solitudes of the Arctic regions. A New Year's party, in 1831, was planned at the Athenæum Club, to consist entirely of the bright spirits of the age. Goldsmith had imagined such a symposium a generation before:

We'll have Johnson and Burke, all the wits will be there;

with a reminiscence, perhaps, of a still earlier repast promised to Boileau:

Molière avec Tartufe, y doit jouer son rôle.

But this particular banquet turned out a dull affair, and, indeed, none of the guests were of very distinguished mark.

Greville records the banquet, where Maule—afterwards Justice Maule—was very rude to him. On an earlier New Year's Day, Greville himself had begun his Diary, for which posterity may be mildly grateful, although doubtless it was a grievous burden to the poor man himself. The Diary gives us another New Year's Day, that of 1838, which "opens in gloom and uncertainty. The Chartist are in great force, collecting arms and constantly practising at firing at a mark." How timid were our grandfathers and grandmothers! If they trembled all over at the Chartists with their harmless five points, what sort of a face would they have made to the Socialists, the Anarchists, to say nothing of the Dynamiters, of to-day!

A few years afterwards it was the Corn Law agitation which was making people tremble; and New Year's Day, 1846, found Sir Robert Peel busy in rearranging the Ministry which was to carry their repeal. In 1851 the New Year opened with great anticipations of the world's fair and of the wonderful glass palace that was rising under Sir Joseph Paxton's auspices among the trees in Hyde Park.

It was a gloomy New Year's Day, that which the British Army spent in 1855 on the frozen plateau before Sebastopol. A third of the troops were in hospital. The warm clothing destined for the army had been lost in the wreck of the "Prince," or was lying hopelessly embedded in a chaos of useless stores. The soldiers were in rags, and with biscuits and salt junk for their daily rations, they were hardly able to hold the trenches which were continually searched by the heavy fire of a powerful artillery.

On the following New Year's Day the interest was transferred to the French capital; for under the Second Empire this was the special day for manifestoes of future policy. All Europe waited with some apprehension to hear what might be said by the Emperor at his New Year receptions. In 1856 the Emperor reviewed his guard and bade them hold themselves in readiness, for a great French Army would soon be on the march—a threat directed against Prussia, which a good many years after was duly acknowledged.

The peace that was concluded with Russia seemed to open out a new era of wealth and prosperity, agitated, but

scarcely interrupted by the terrible Indian Mutiny. And 1857 was the most delightful year of which there is any record in England, the weather perfect, and an outdoor life almost becoming a habit. New Year's Day, 1858, opened like one of a genial spring. Needless to say that soon came a killing frost, and nipped any hopes of a cycle of genial years.

In 1859 we have Napoleon again fulminating on New Year's Day in a peremptory speech to the Austrian Ambassador. And the campaign which followed, with the victories of Solferino and Magenta, brought the Emperor to the zenith of his power and fame.

The usual New Year's articles in our daily papers of the first of January, 1866, announced "a world at peace," and congratulated the country on its commercial and social prosperity. The year proved a disastrous one. In May came the suspension of Overend and Gurney, with Black Friday in the City, and a general breakdown of credit, which brought poverty and distress to many helpless families. And on the second of July Sadowa was fought, and Prussia, victorious over Austria, became the leading power in Europe.

Perhaps the blackest, bitterest day of the century was the New Year's Day of 1871. Before Christmas the frost set in with a severity unknown for many years. The military administration of France had been completely crushed, its chief armies dispersed or captured; but she was still struggling, with hasty levies and an improvised Government, against overwhelming odds. Paris, invested since the twentieth of September, was reduced to the last extremity. On the Jour de l'An the bombardment was at its height, shells were raining down upon the beautiful city; the Seine, encumbered with ice, brought down the bodies of men killed in desperate sorties or drowned in the retreat. It was a day of darkness and despair. The most hopeful hardly dared to make a forecast of the future. Yet France has risen from the disaster, stronger and with a more wholesome strength.

Again, among the phantasmagoria of the past, we may picture the brilliant scene at Calcutta on New Year's Day, 1876, when the Prince of Wales was holding a grand chapter of the Star of India, surrounded by tributary potentates in their magnificence of jewellery and costume.

But another portentous New Year's Day was that of 1878, when the Russian hosts

had passed the Balkans and were pouring into the plains with nothing to arrest their victorious march on long-coveted Constantinople. A great war seemed imminent, but we were happily quit for the scare, and July brought us "Peace with honour" from Berlin.

Approaching nearer and nearer to the present time, we are brought more and more under the influence of the depressing "fin-de-siècle" feeling, and to rest our hopes rather on the absence of misfortune than on any brilliant forecasts of the future. But this wiry old century may still have its surprises for us, and its future chronicler may yet have to add to the record of notable New Year's Days.

THE IRON HORSE IN THE HOLY LAND.

THE services of the ubiquitous Cook have for years rendered travel in the Holy Land, and in Egypt, so much less formidable than it used to be, that the public mind has been prepared to regard with calmness developments which at one time would have been discussed excitedly as wonders of the age. The railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem, for instance, is now quietly accepted as an accomplished fact, just like the railway to Constantinople, or the still more remarkable tracks across the Rocky Mountains. But while everybody knows that now the iron road links the seaboard with the City which is regarded as Sacred by the three great religions of the world, not so many people are aware of a hardly less interesting projection of nineteenth century enterprise into Syria.

Yet commercially, and perhaps even socially, the Damascus railway is potentially far more important than the Jerusalem railway.

The city of Damascus is, somehow, much less familiar to the Western world than is the City of the Holy Sepulchre, and probably most people think of the capital of Syria only as a place of departed glory and decay. Apart from the Bible narrative, and the tradition of famous sword-blades, Damascus has probably no definite place in the average mind at all. Yet not only has it played an important part in the great drama of the world, not only has it a history fading away into the far back atmosphere of myth, but it is to-day one of the greatest cities in the East. It was a city in the days of Abraham, and it has

remained a city ever since, although it has been twelve times destroyed, and has been successively occupied by Syrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks.

A city of four thousand years old which still retains importance as a centre of commerce and of social life can be no mean place.

But old as it is, the modern Damascus has little of the outward splendour of the East, though it is an active entrepôt of trade. Its streets are mean, but its wealth is great. Not less than a quarter of a million of people permanently inhabit its houses, while its bazaars are constantly thronged by traders from all parts of the East. The capital of Syria is, in short, a sort of commercial "hub" of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, where, as Lady Burton has written, one may daily observe: "the Circassian and Anatolian; the wild Bedouin Sheik; the fat, oily, cunning, money-making Jew; the warlike-looking Druse; the rough Kurd; the sleek, fawning, frightened Christian; the grave, sinister Moslem; the self-possessed Persian; the waddling Turk; the quiet, deep-looking Afghan; the dark and trusty Algerine." "Every costume of Asia," she says, "every sect of religion, all talking different tongues, all bringing their wares to sell, or coming to buy; every tongue, every race jostling one another and struggling through the strings of mules, camels, donkeys, and thoroughbred mares."

But Damascus is a hundred miles from the sea-coast, and dependent on camels for carriage, and, therefore, according to Western ideas, at least a hundred miles from anywhere. Surrounded by beautiful gardens and orchards, decorated with stately mosques and picturesque minarets, this wonderful old city seems to Europeans to be buried in the desert. It is an anachronism—this place of busy trade, so far removed from the course of the great commercial currents of the world; this town of shabby-looking houses, whose rich interiors are said to exceed in magnificence and beauty anything to be found in either Cairo or Constantinople.

No longer is it famed for the sword-blades which attained such a fabulous value—Sheffield and Birmingham having taken its place. No longer is it famed for the snowy damask—which Dunfermline and Belfast can now turn out so much more cheaply. But in silk and cotton and woollen fabrics its manufactures are still extensive and renowned; and for delicate decorative

work in the precious metals it remains without a rival. And so, seated on the banks of the river Abans, at the foot of the mountains of Lebanon, the city of Damascus, as both a survival of the dim and distant past, and an expression of the living present, is one of the most interesting places in the world.

To connect Damascus with the Western world there are now two projects. One is the scheme of a French company, who have obtained a concession from the Sultan of Turkey for the construction of a railway from the port of Beyrout to Damascus; and another is the scheme of an English company, who have obtained a concession for the construction of a line from the Bay of Acre to Damascus. The British enterprise has naturally the most interest for us, and as it is now in progress, we propose to give a brief description of it.

The idea of a railway in Syria, it may be remarked, is no new one. It was first mooted some fifty years ago, and was discussed from time to time; but to the present Sultan—who is much more enlightened and progressive than is generally supposed—belongs the honour of giving it authority. It required, however, much hard fighting against traditional habits and Turkish procrastination for Mr. J. R. Pilling to obtain the formal concession—nothing can be done in the Turkish dominions without a "firman"—which was at length granted to him a few years ago. Surveys had then to be made, and these took up some four years; and then the capital had to be got together, which required more time. Sir Douglas Fox was selected as the engineer of the line, which is to be built on the solid English system, and of the English standard gauge.

The two things upon which the engineers had first to decide, were the starting-point at the coast, and the line of route to be followed.

After much careful consideration, Sir Douglas Fox decided in favour of the Bay of Acre, which is three miles deep and eight miles across, having at one end the ancient town of Acre—or Akka—famous in the Crusades, in the wars of Bonaparte, and in the revolt of Ibrahim Pasha; and at the other end, the modern town of Haifa, which has been made familiar to English readers by the long residence in its neighbourhood of the late Laurence Oliphant.

Neither of these places is at present of great commercial importance, but the Bay

of Acre is said to be the only bay on the Syrian coast able to accommodate safely our large modern ships. In ancient days Tyre and Sidon were the great ports of this coast, and from Tyre went the fleets of the enterprising Phœnicians, long before the Christian Era. But nothing more marks the difference between the ships of the ancient and of the modern maritime nations than the utter unsuitability of the ancient ports for our modern ships.

Now Acre, although a place of small population and of limited trade, is a Turkish military centre, and is destined to become a great depôt of the Ottoman Empire; while Haifa is destined to become a great entrepôt of commerce.

The railway line begins in a fork, one prong being Acre, and the other Haifa. The junction of the prongs is formed at the head of the Bay some distance to the east of Haifa, and thereafter the line traverses the Plain of Esdraelon, along the foot of Mount Carmel. The first station is at Belled-es-Sheikh. In crossing the Plain the railway leaves Nazareth some distance to the left, but runs close by Nain, for which the station will be Shunem. From Shunem the route is through Jezreel, and the land of Issachar, to the valley of the Jordan.

Following the course of the Jordan for some distance, the railway then crosses the river on a bridge, and skirting the lower end of the Sea of Galilee reaches the Hauran Plain—the ancient land of Og, King of Bashan. The next important places are the towns of Gamala, Kishfin, and Nawa, at which point the Plain of Damascus is reached. Running across this Plain, the railway passes along the eastern base of Mount Hermon, and so enters the city of Damascus from the south. Thus it traverses the region where the tradition says that Job pastured his flocks and herds—a region which, until comparatively recent times, was well populated, as the ruins of numerous villages testify, until the people were driven out by the Arabs, who here fatten their cattle and horses, after their long journey from Mesopotamia on the way to the markets of Egypt.

The wonderful fertility of the soil of this region is proverbial, and enables one to understand how Syria was once known as the granary of the world. The author of "The Land and the Book" says of the valley of the Jordan that "few spots on earth, and none in this country, possess

greater agricultural and manufacturing advantages than this valley, and yet it is utterly desolate"—until the railway wakens it to a new life.

Some years ago, when the concession had just been granted to a Turkish syndicate—afterwards cancelled and a new one given to Mr. Pilling—Laurence Oliphant wrote: "It needs only a more satisfactory administration on the part of the Government, and the connection of this district with the sea by rail, to make Beisan an important commercial and manufacturing centre. All kinds of machinery might be driven at small expense by its abounding brooks, and then the lovely Valley of Jezreel above it, irrigated by the Jalad, and the Ghar Beisan below, watered in every part by many fertilising streams, are capable of sustaining a little nation in and of themselves."

But a little bit of engineering is required to carry the railway down this valley, for the river is here eight hundred feet below the level of the sea.

At Djir-el-Medjamieh is an ancient Roman bridge of three arches, over which the camels still carry the produce of the Hauran to the coast, and near this ancient viaduct the new railway bridge will probably be built, thus bringing the old and the new civilisation side by side in a striking manner.

The grain trade must be even now very large, for Laurence Oliphant said that he used to see thousands of grain-laden camels collected at the gates of both Acre and Haifa, waiting to be relieved of their burdens, from the rich interior plains. And this was not part of the actual Damascus trade, which for the most part finds its way along the carriage-road which the French made some years ago across the Lebanon to Beyrout. When the Syria-Ottoman Railway, however, is completed, all the westward trade of Damascus, as well as the traffic of the intervening regions, will, it is expected, pass along the line.

One of the privileges of the concession, we understand, is to place and run steamers on the Sea of Galilee. Concerning this it is interesting to recall what Oliphant wrote in 1883: "The great Plain of Genesareth, across which I rode, is now a waste of the most luxuriant wild vegetation, watered by three fine streams, besides being well supplied with springs. It was celebrated of old for the amount and variety of its produce; and I have no

doubt is again destined to be so. The plains in which Bethlehem and Capernaum stood formerly are all covered with heavy vegetation, which conceals the extensive ruins of the cities which once adorned them; and there is a fine back country within easy reach of the lake, which will send its produce to it as soon as means of transportation are provided. At present there are only half-a-dozen sailing-boats on the Lake of Tiberias, or Sea of Galilee—rather a contrast from the time when Josephus collected no fewer than two hundred and thirty war-ships with which to attack Tiberias in the war against the Romans; and the fish with which it abounded in the days of the miraculous draught are more miraculously numerous than ever; for fishing as an industry has almost ceased to exist, and the finny tribe are left undisturbed. There are some celebrated sulphur baths also on the shores of the lake, and within two miles of the town of Tiberias, which are visited annually by thousands of patients."

It is said that even now the Plains of Bashan produce upwards of two hundred thousand tons of grain annually, all of which is conveyed either to Damascus or to the coast on camels. Travellers say that on these plains furrows a mile long are frequently seen. The great cost of carriage necessarily restricts the tillage, but, with the railway, an enormous development in agriculture appears almost certain. Besides grain, the country is capable of producing wool, cotton, olives and other fruit, and is peculiarly adapted for the cultivation of the silk-worm. The passenger traffic may not be extensive at first, as the population of the whole region does not probably exceed one million, but it is bound to grow as trade develops. And, moreover, the line will doubtless be largely used by tourists and pilgrims.

Meanwhile, the promoters count upon a revenue of about forty-five thousand pounds a year from passengers, and about one hundred and eighty thousand pounds a year from goods; the latter estimate being based on a traffic of about one hundred and eighty thousand tons. The estimated cost of construction and preliminary expenses is about two millions sterling. This seems a small sum for a railway of about one hundred and fifty miles; but then three-fourths of it will be over almost level plains, involving neither expensive cuttings nor costly embankments.

Haifa, as we have said, will be the coast

terminus for the goods traffic, and it is intended to form a line of swift steamers between that port and London. By-and-by, it is thought that the bulk of the foreign trade of Syria—which amounts to about five and a half millions sterling per annum, including about one million's worth of Manchester goods—will concentrate at Haifa, because there the outward steamers will always be able to get homeward cargoes of grain and other produce brought down by the railway.

Consul Trotter, of Beyrout, in a recent official report, says that: "It may be safely concluded that of all the railway schemes hitherto propounded in Syria, this is the most reasonable and hopeful, from an engineering and financial point of view. Whether it will be productive of immediate dividends is another question; but at any rate, it may be said that if this railway will not pay there is very little chance of any railway paying in Syria."

Several miles of it have already been laid, and perhaps in the not very dim and distant future, the Syria-Ottoman railway may be continued to the Persian Gulf, and so on towards the Indian frontier, in realisation of a long-cherished dream.

Haifa, the commercial terminus, is quite a modern place compared with the Governmental terminus, Akka, or Acre, or St. Jean d'Acre—a town which has had a more eventful history than any other on the coast of Syria. It was called by Bonaparte the Key of Palestine, and it has been the scene of almost countless contests. Laurence Oliphant was able to make up a list of no fewer than fifteen sieges which the town has undergone, without including numerous more or less doubtful episodes in the time of the ancient Egyptians. The first authentic siege was in the year 721 B.C., when Shalmaneser tried to wrest the fortress from the Syrians, and the last was in the year 1840 A.D., when Sir Charles Napier bombarded it with English guns, aided by those of the allied Austrian and Turkish fleets.

It contains now but a small population, variously estimated at from nine to fifteen thousand, for the most part cooped up in the fortifications, but it is picturesque enough. Oliphant said that there is no more characteristic bazaar in the East than that of Acre, with its motley crowd of wild Bedouins; devout Parsees; Turkish soldiers; white-turbaned Druses; wild, gipsy-looking Metawalis; Syrian Christians; and Moslem peasants—with the accom-

paniment of veiled women, long strings of camels, an occasional foreigner, and a few sailors from the ships in harbour.

It possesses a unique mosque—that of Jezzar Pacha, with vaulted galleries, supported by ancient columns brought from the ruins of Tyre and Cæsarea—four Christian churches, and an immense citadel. In ancient times it was the most populous and flourishing place on the Syrian seaboard after the decline of Tyre and Sidon, and must have housed an immense population, but it is only once mentioned in the Old Testament, as a town from which the tribe of Asher did not succeed in driving the Canaanites; and once in the New Testament, under the name of Ptolemais, as a place visited by Saint Paul on his way from Greece to Jerusalem.

Besides the Syria-Ottoman line, another railway is in course of construction in Palestine. This is the line from Beyrout to Damascus, already mentioned, for which a concession has been obtained by a French company. This, however, will be a much more expensive railway to construct than that we have been describing, as it has to cross two mountain-ranges. It is, however, a shorter route, and as Beyrout is a great emporium of trade and centre of finance, the French line—the building of which has been assigned to a Paris Société de Construction—will doubtless be a formidable competitor of the English line. The latter, however, will have the advantage of the prospective traffic of the fertile country it traverses between Damascus and the sea.

A word in conclusion as to the Jaffa and Jerusalem railway, now in actual operation.

This scheme also dates back for fifty years, or nearly so, although it did not take shape until about 1860, when three lines of route were advocated. One was the old Roman road from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, passing Mizpeh and over the battlefield of Joshua and the five Kings. A modification of this route found the largest number of supporters, the plan being to start from Jaffa in an easterly direction, cross the mountains by the Pass of Bath-Horon, and approach Jerusalem from the north. This route was carefully explored and surveyed by French engineers in 1874 and in the following year.

Meanwhile, however, a German-American named Zimpel, who lived in Jerusalem, and who had for himself surveyed the various routes, had decided that one more to the south was preferable. He was an ex-

perienced railroad engineer, as well as a scientist, and he settled at Jerusalem to practise medicine while maturing his scheme.

He died, however, before it reached fruition. The line of route actually adopted follows that laid down so long ago by Zimpel. It was recognised in the end by practical experts to be the best, because two-thirds of its course were over plains.

The concession was granted by the Sultan of Turkey to a French company, and the railway has been built by French engineers with French capital. Most of the rails and the coal were imported from Belgium, the other appliances from France, and labour from the Soudan and Algeria. Great difficulties attended the landing of the plant at Jaffa, and much trouble attended the labour question, especially when the hills of Judea were reached. But in two years and a-half the railway was completed at a cost of about half a million sterling, and in September of last year it was formally opened to traffic.

Between Jaffa and Jerusalem there are five stations: Ludd, the Lod of the Hebrews and the Lydda of the Romans; Ramleh, in the midst of olive groves; Es Sejid, a place of water supply; Deir-Aban, in the country of Samson; Bittir, the first station among the mountains, situated amid wild and romantic scenery, and where are the vegetable gardens which supply Jerusalem; and an intermediate station.

Jerusalem stands two thousand four hundred and eighty feet above the level of the terminus at Jaffa, and it takes the train three and a half hours to make the journey of fifty-three miles. The return ticket, first-class, costs about sixteen francs, and for this small sum one is transported across a country every rood of which is rich in Bible associations.

The shriek of the locomotive will soon be as familiar on the plains of Syria and in the valley of the Jordan, as it is already amid the hills of Judea and in the vicinity of Holy Jerusalem.

PAWNED.

(FACT.)

Av, times wer' bitter hard, honey. I'se fourscore years and ten,
But I'se never seed like hungering deed as what wer' round us then;
For t' yards wer' closed, and t' jet wer' nowt, and t' seas wer' wild and rough,
An' every step one went one heard trouble an' want enuff.

Up? this very yard, wheer I has bided all my life,
 Wer' two who couldn't face it out—sick bairns and
 hungry wife;
 One hanged hisself, and one just slipped off t' pier-
 side at t' flood;
 Some says they walks. I've watched for 'em; see
 'em I never could.

Well, well, it's years agon, an' things brightened up
 bit by bit.
 It's none for lack o' bread or fire I wants to threep
 on it;
 But it left a secret in my heart, that weary time we
 passed,
 I'd go a deal the easier if I got it told at last.

Nay, I never heeded parsons much. I can't tell
 half they say,
 An' I've too auld to get to church this many a weary
 day;
 Thou'rt friendly-like, and knows a bit how t' poor
 mun toil an' strive
 To keep a blaze upon t' hearth, an' t' childer just
 alive.

Doan't let on what I tells thee; I fain would keep it
 hid.
 When I lies quiet 'neath t' mools, the desprite thing
 I did.
 We hadn't had a stroke o' work for six long months
 an' more,
 My man had grown despairing like, an' t' wolf wer'
 at t' door.

At t' door—an' over t' threshold, too, an' ravening
 at t' hearth—
 Theer didn't seem a way o' help for us in heaven or
 earth.
 He'd split up t' chairs for fuel, an' t' bed had
 gone a week;
 He'd sold the shoes fra off his feet, for he'd no
 work to seek.

T' bairns stopped clamouring for bread, they'd
 scarcalins voice to cry,
 My master says—half fierce he spoke, "Let's sit us
 down an' die."
 I starts up by him fra t' floor, I daredn't meet his
 look,
 An' takes It out o' t' bit o' rag, and gangs an' pawns
 t' Book.

That very night one found us who'd a bit o' brass
 to give,
 An' got my master set at work, an' helped us on to
 live,
 An' eh! I wished I'd waited just a few hours more,
 But the God the Book is wrote about, He knows our
 need wer' sore.

But I niver got It back no more. I scratted up t'
 brass,
 I went an' showed my ticket, an' up speaks t'
 saucy lass
 As kept t' shop: "We lost enow by all the stuff we
 got,
 An' a stranger liked the look on It, an' so I sold t'
 lot."

When Holy Tommy—he as got clapped up i' t' gaol
 for theft—
 Wer' preaching out on t' Staithes, he said as how
 some souls wer' left
 To vengeance for t' unknown sin for iver—an' I
 shook
 To think I'd mebbey sinned yon sin t' night I pawned
 the Book.

Read it again, bairn, how His blood washed all our
 stains away,
 T' words wer' written same as in the one I pawned,
 I lay;
 I've glad I've got thee telled on it. Heaven give thee
 thy reward
 For speaking comfort t'rd me; an' eh! t' times wer'
 hard!

HIS SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

HE was not, in the days of which I am
 about to speak, the celebrated painter he
 has since become. He was just as clever—
 perhaps fresher and more original—but
 his light was hidden under the bushel of
 his sordid, every-day cares, and even in his
 most sanguine moments he scarcely dreamt
 of celebrity. He had begun life with
 plenty of ambition and almost inexhaustible
 energy; but circumstances had thwarted
 the one and turned the other to an un-
 congenial use, so that instead of the great
 things he would and could have done, he
 used to esteem himself lucky if he got a
 small picture indifferently hung in one of
 the London exhibitions. His work was
 scarcely noticed, still less criticised, and he
 might have remained obscure till the end
 of things, if his name and address in the
 Academy catalogue had not happened to
 stand immediately above a certain name
 and address which a certain great lady
 was looking for on a certain private show
 day, which was destined to be the turning-
 point in the history of more than one
 person.

The name which the lady was looking
 for is, to us, totally unimportant. The
 one which caught her eye and attention
 was, "Wyndham, Lewis, ten, Bristol
 Terrace, Carchester. Number one thousand
 two hundred and ninety-six."

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, more to her-
 self than to her companion, "a Carchester
 genius! That is interesting. I must look
 up his picture. Now, my dear Sir Anthony,"
 she went on, "you mustn't let me bore
 you. I know you have had enough of it."

"I wonder why you say that!" rejoined
 the person addressed, half reproachfully.
 "You know I should never have enough
 of it—with you. Besides, I have a heap
 of things to say to you, and in this crowd,
 and while you have been so busy with the
 pictures, I haven't been able to speak a
 word."

It was getting late and the crowd was
 thinning, but she did not seem inclined to
 encourage him to say any of the "heap of
 things" he had on his mind.

"It will be in room five—no, six,"
 she said, consulting her catalogue again.
 "So if you really don't mind coming with
 me, let us go." And he followed her
 submissively.

"Did you ever see any one so desperately

in love as poor Mainwaring!" said some one, looking after them as they passed. "I wonder if she cares for him?"

"Cares for him!" rejoined the man addressed. "Not she! She never has cared, and never will care, for any one."

"Well, I wonder if she'll accept him?"

"She may," was the answer, "for the same reason as she married the late Mr. Kerr."

"But she married Kerr, or was married to him—which is, I suppose, the correct version of the story—for his money. She's a rich woman now, and Mainwaring is as poor as a church mouse."

"Yes, but remember his family, the oldest in Southdownshire."

"My good fellow, she doesn't go in for family. She cultivates the painter, sculptor, penny-a-liner sort of fellow. She won't marry into a stiff, stuck-up family like Mainwaring's."

"Well, I don't care if she doesn't. I tell you what," he added with a sudden air of conviction, "she's the handsomest woman in London, and she's thirty if she's a day; Lady St. Aubyn says so."

Meanwhile the couple under discussion were standing before number one thousand two hundred and ninety-six, which was a small picture hung in a corner. The subject of it was a fisher boy, sitting listlessly on a cottage window seat dangling his long legs and gazing out through the mullioned panes on to an estuary, where the tide was low and the boats lay stranded among the brilliant red and green seaweed.

She looked at it critically and long. Then she put a mark against it in her catalogue.

"Wyndham, of Carchester," she said meditatively; "do you happen to have heard of him?"

"I don't know," was the reply, "but I believe a fellow of that name teaches my sister Ursula. She dabbles in paint when we are down at Carchester."

"Ah, well," she said, "he must be clever. The next time I am at Bryanthurst I shall cultivate his acquaintance."

"Shall you?" he said, a shade of surprise in his tone.

"Why not?" she asked, smiling.

"Oh, well," he replied hesitatingly, "I don't think it would do exactly. That is, if he really is the painting master. You see, in town one expects to meet a medley of people, but at Bryanthurst it's different. People are so much more exclusive in the country."

"I suppose they are," she rejoined, still smiling, and then she put another mark against one thousand two hundred and ninety-six. "It is later than I thought," she went on, "and I am dining at the St. Aubyns'! I think I must go."

He followed her down the steps to her carriage.

"Will you take me as far as the Park?" he said, when she held out her hand to bid him good-bye. "I have not said my say yet."

She made room for him beside her, but there was no cordiality in her manner.

"You can guess what it is," he began, leaning forward so that she could hear his lowered voice in the roar of Piccadilly. "I want to finish what I began to say to you last night."

"My dear Sir Anthony," she replied, "I had so much rather you did not finish. If I could have given you the answer you want, I would have heard you to the end last night."

"I guessed as much," he said, bearing his discomfiture as if he had expected it; "but still I have something to ask. I know you always say you will not marry again. But you are young. You may change your mind. Is there any hope for me if you do?"

"I don't know about my youth," she replied. "I am eight-and-twenty. Still, of course, a woman may always change her mind. In spite of which I cannot tell you either to hope or to wait."

"I shall do the one if not the other," he said, "and you won't mind being friends, just the same as ever?"

"Of course," she replied, "why should we not be friends? If I don't want to marry I don't wish to be friendless. There, good-bye. Please don't kiss my hand in the street. It isn't proper."

A few days later the small household of number ten, Bristol Terrace, Carchester, was thrown into a flutter of excitement by an announcement from Burlington House that Mr. Lewis Wyndham's picture, "Low Water," had been sold to Lady Patricia Kerr, of Bryanthurst.

"Lady Patricia Kerr," said Wyndham, laying down the letter, "who is she?"

"She is the widow of old Mr. Kerr who used to keep the bank in Jewry Street," replied his mother. "People talked about her a great deal in Carchester at the time she married. It was when you were living in Paris. Her father was a Scotch peer. She was seventeen and her husband

nearly seventy. But I've heard nothing about her now for a long time."

"I have!" said Wyndham's sister. "I have heard that Sir Anthony Mainwaring wants to marry her."

"Perhaps," went on the elder lady, "it was Sir Anthony who spoke to her of you."

"Not he!" said Wyndham.

"It's a splendid thing, anyhow," resumed his mother, "and when it gets known it might bring you a better class of pupils."

"Dash the pupils!" cried Wyndham impatiently. "I wish there were no such things as pupils."

"My dear Lewis," exclaimed his mother, "don't talk like that. It's tempting Providence. How should we keep this roof over our heads if it weren't for your pupils?"

"Yes," he said, "they are certainly necessary, but none the less an evil."

Then he handed over Lady Patricia's cheque to his mother, and, having carefully brushed his shabby coat, went to pay his bi-weekly visit to Miss Oramham's select boarding-school, where—while he made never-ending corrections of hopeless proportion and perspective—he solaced himself by building the most romantic castles in the air on the narrow basis of this, his first stroke of luck.

But the days wore on into months; Lady Patricia's cheque was absorbed into the everlasting arrears of household bills, and Wyndham's castles in the air were in serious need of repair.

"I was an idiot," he said to himself; "as if selling a picture could make any difference to the utter hopelessness of it all!"

Meanwhile an unusually brilliant London season had run its course. A Royal wedding and an Imperial visit had filled society's list of engagements to overflowing; and, when it was all over, Lady Patricia Kerr went abroad to recruit, and then to Scotland to spend Christmas among her own people. It was there she got a letter from her house-steward at Bryanthurst, reminding her that he was still waiting for directions as to the hanging of certain pictures she had had sent down from London months before.

"Pictures!" she ejaculated. "Of course. What an oversight! And then there is that man at Carchester whose painting I liked so much. I ought to have gone to Bryanthurst long ago."

About a week later a smart brougham drove through Carchester to Bristol Terrace, and an unimpeachable footman descended from it to execute a knock on the door of number ten, such as seldom surprised that unpretending locality. Then Mrs. Wyndham's rough-handed maid-of-all-work carried to her mistress a visiting card on which the good lady read with astonishment the name of Lady Patricia Kerr. The next moment the visitor had entered a dingy little sitting-room, where the fumes of the last meal were waiting for those of the next to overpower them.

"Is Mr. Wyndham at home?" she asked, smiling graciously, while inwardly she wondered what connexion existed between the painter and the solid, eminently commonplace old lady who was the sole occupant of the room. Perhaps she was his wife; perhaps he, too, was elderly, bulky, and uninteresting-looking—well, anyhow he was clever, and here she was. "I hope he is at home," she continued, during the momentary pause which Mrs. Wyndham needed to recover herself before she said:

"My son is out, but I expect him in directly, if your ladyship does not mind waiting."

"Thank you," replied Lady Patricia, with an involuntary sense of relief at the explanation of the old lady's position. "I will certainly wait if you will allow me. You remember my name, perhaps. I am the owner of one of Mr. Wyndham's pictures. I am most anxious to secure another. I wonder if he will be kind enough to show me anything he may have in his studio?"

"I am afraid, your ladyship," was the reply, "that he hasn't much finished work. He has so little time for painting pictures—at least, like the one you bought."

"Hasn't he? Then I am wrong in imagining him to be an artist by profession?"

"He was educated as an artist," replied the old lady proudly. "He studied in what he says was the very best school in Paris; but now he gives most of his time to teaching."

"Indeed!" said Lady Patricia. "But isn't that rather a pity? His picture seemed to show such talent. Does he prefer teaching?"

"Oh, no, that he doesn't!" cried the artist's mother. "He'd far rather paint

pictures. But, you see, painting pictures is a precarious way of getting a living, and pupils are pretty safe when you've got a good connection to start with. You see, it isn't as if Lewis had only himself to think of; but there's me and his sister. If it wasn't for us he'd live abroad. He doesn't care a bit for exhibiting in London," she continued, warming up with her subject. "That is, he'd far rather send his pictures to Paris if he could afford it. But when my poor husband died some years ago there were complications. His business—he was a solicitor—didn't wind up as well as we expected it to; so Lewis had to come home and take his place as the bread-winner for the family. He gets on very well, I'm thankful to say. He's getting quite a county connection now, since he's taught Miss Mainwaring, and his time's almost filled up."

"He must be a very good son," said Lady Patricia, thinking, as she spoke, of the wistful look in the face of the boy who sat gazing out at the stranded boats.

"Yes, he's a good son," assented the old lady; "but he gets very discontented now and again. He's never really settled down to it. But he's the best of sons for all that. Ah, there he comes. Lewis," she went on, bustling out into the narrow front passage, "here is Lady Patricia Kerr; she wants to see you."

Lady Patricia's interest in the painter of "Low Water" had, during her conversation with his communicative mother, considerably deepened. She was a peculiar species of the genus of which Mrs. Leo Hunter is the personating type. She did not trouble herself much about the lions before whom every one agrees to bow down in admiration. She preferred to unearth her big game herself, and to force from a select æsthetic circle the admission that her critical acumen was superior to that of the ordinary dilettante. She had not unnaturally presupposed Mr. Wyndham to be a young man with his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder, who would finally be a great credit to his earliest patron, always supposing that he allowed himself to be patronised. But the real state of the case was much more enticing. She had come on her lion hampered and enslaved by the meshes of a net which she could easily sunder, and she felt a little thrill of elation at the thought of the glory his emancipation would reflect on her. She looked at him eagerly as he entered. She saw a vigorous-looking man

of middle height, past his first youth, his dark, irregular face barely redeemed from ugliness by remarkably fine grey eyes. His general appearance was as unpretending as his abode. He looked plain, brisk, businesslike. There was no hint of artistic license in his dress or manner, no protest against the Phillistinism of his commonplace surroundings, no assertion of conscious superiority to his daily life. He bowed to his visitor and waited for her to speak.

"I wonder," she began, with a little tremor of excitement which surprised herself, "I wonder if I may claim a few minutes of your valuable time, Mr. Wyndham? The fact is, I am so charmed with your picture that I want to see if I can find a companion to it in your studio."

His face brightened perceptibly; but by way of answer he shook his head.

"I am sorry to say I have nothing in my studio," he said, "but studies and sketches."

"So Mrs. Wyndham feared," replied Lady Patricia. "Still, unless you make it a rule not to show your work to strangers, it would give me great pleasure to look at what you have."

"I have no rules about strangers," he said grimly, "for the simple reason that strangers do not come. All that you care to see I will show you."

Then he rose and led the way to a capacious garret, lighted from the roof. Every available bit of the walls was hung with canvases of every shape and size, other canvases were piled in stacks, bulging portfolios lay here and there, and under the skylight stood an easel on which was an unfinished sketch of a girl's head. But the room was nearly destitute of those countless accessories, those gleams of coloured draperies, those graceful lines of form which the artist's eye delights in. It was less an artist's studio than a poor painter's workshop.

"Is this what you call 'nothing' in your studio?" cried Lady Patricia. "I should call it an immense accumulation of work."

"It is an accumulation I might just as well never have allowed to gather," he replied. "The folly is that I am always slaving to increase it."

"Why do you say folly?" she asked with some surprise. "You must work, you have your name to make."

"So I used to think," he replied. "I have given up that idea now."

She looked at him for a moment in silence. There was a certain bitterness in his tone—a constraint in his manner—that stirred her almost to a sense of shame that she had been so long in coming to his help.

"Mrs. Wyndham has told me your history," she said. "I know you have made a very noble sacrifice."

"I don't know about the nobility," he rejoined; "I simply shouldered a responsibility I could not refuse."

"It comes to just the same thing," she said, and as she spoke she began moving slowly round the room, examining here and there with a careful eye.

In front of the easel she stopped. He stepped hastily forward.

"Please do not look at that," he said nervously, "it is a miserable thing. An unfinished study from memory," and he lifted it from its place.

"The expression seems half familiar to me," she said interrogatively, but he made no answer, and she continued her investigation with a comment now and again. Presently she seated herself on the wooden stool before the easel and looked at the artist.

"Mr. Wyndham," she began slowly, "I have a proposal to make to you. It occurred to me while Mrs. Wyndham was talking downstairs, and I have thought it over up here. I should like you to paint my portrait—a full-length, life-size portrait—for the next Paris Salon. Could I persuade you to undertake such a commission?"

He had moved a step nearer while she spoke. The soft light from above fell on her dazzling auburn hair, and gave tender shadows to her creamy skin; her eyes flashed on him, half in command, half in entreaty. She looked to him like the embodiment of a better fate. His chilled ambition caught fire again.

"Persuade is hardly the word," he said. "You do not know what such an offer means to me—to me of all men. Why, a portrait of you as it might be painted would make any man's name and fame, once and for all."

"That is a very fine compliment," she replied, laughing. "I hope there is some truth in it, for your own sake. Then it is settled; and now let us talk of the sittings and of the business side in general."

The road from Carchester to Bryanthurst lies uphill over broad-bosomed downs, in the curves of which, as Lady Patricia

drove homeward, the shadows were gathering, while the meagre Scotch firs and solid yew-trees stood out black against the pale February evening sky. She leaned back in her carriage with a look of satisfaction on her face. "Yes," she said, "it was a splendid compliment from such a man, and I think if it can come true, I would like it to come true for Lewis Wyndham." And then for the rest of her drive her ladyship amused herself by imagining scenes and situations which should grow out of the success in store for the man whom she was going to lift out of obscurity.

"And so you have come to Bryanthurst at last. I thought you had deserted the place; and now I suppose we shall only have you in the neighbourhood for the shortest possible time."

It was Sir Anthony Mainwaring who said this, and Lady Patricia, to whom he spoke, laughed at him.

"You are wrong," she said. "I am going to stay at least two months."

"Two months! That is really kind of you. If you only knew what it means to me. Now, please don't turn the subject, I am not going to say anything—of that kind. I have come to ask you a favour. I want you to help me out of a hobble."

"How can I help you? Of course, it depends on what kind of hobble it is."

"It is about Ursula," he replied. "Now, dear Lady Patricia, you will acknowledge that I hold a very difficult position with regard to my sister. It is so difficult to act as guardian to one's sister—horribly difficult."

"Is it? Now, I should have thought Ursula was an extremely easy girl to manage."

"Of course you would, because she has such a quiet way with her. But you try going against the grain with her."

"Then why do you go against the grain with her? She can't need it."

"Indeed she can, and does; that's just what I have to tell you about. Of course," he continued, lowering his voice, "you know Lord Bertie Ewtree, Lord Southdown's second son?"

"Certainly."

"And isn't he a good sort of fellow, a capital match for any girl—family, looks, cash, everything?"

"Certainly," said Lady Patricia again.

"Well, he wants to marry Ursula, and she won't accept him."

His hearer smiled.

"Perhaps she doesn't care for him."

"But why shouldn't she care for him? Any girl might care for Bertie. I tell you she's a dreadful responsibility, and I want you to talk to her."

"About your responsibility, or about Lord Bertie?" she asked.

"Oh, about everything. I don't believe she realises what she's doing in refusing him."

"Perhaps," suggested Lady Patricia, "perhaps there is some one else."

"There can be nobody else—who else could there be? No one can fancy Ursula with two strings to her bow. Now you will talk to her, won't you? If you are staying a long while you will have lots of chances."

"I'll do what I can. But you must know I am going to be very busy. I have a great undertaking on hand. You ought to be interested. Do you remember my talking to you one day at the Academy about a certain Mr. Wyndham, an artist at Carchester? No, you don't? And you said you fancied Ursula was a pupil of his. You remember now? Well, I have unearthed Mr. Wyndham, and have commissioned him to paint my portrait. Now, why do you look so cross?"

"I'm not looking cross, I was only wondering why you let a third-rate fellow make a picture of you."

"You mustn't call him third-rate till my picture has been in the Salon, my friend—after that you may chime in with the opinion of the multitude."

Sir Anthony rose to go. He did not care how Lewis Wyndham ranked as an artist; he only wished Lady Patricia cared less for art.

"But you will make an opportunity of talking to Ursula," he said, as he took leave, "or, anyhow, you will take the first that offers itself, just to oblige me?"

And Lady Patricia promised.

The opportunity, however, either never came, or Lady Patricia let it slip. On the whole, she saw little of her neighbours, the Mainwarings, in the weeks that followed, for the painting of her portrait absorbed a large share of her time and attention, and left her altogether indisposed for minding other people's business, even by special request.

"I wish so much," Mr. Wyndham had said the first time she posed for him in his garret studio, "that it were possible for me to make a couple of studies of you

before beginning the actual portrait, but I fear you would find it too irksome to have to sit so much."

"Irksome!" she replied, smiling on him graciously, "why should I find it irksome? Quite the contrary. I have placed myself in your hands. You will, of course, do whatever you consider necessary to your complete success."

"You are very, very good," he said, letting his eyes rest for a moment gratefully on hers.

And then, Lady Patricia Kerr, who always declared that for her the day of youthful emotion had passed by on the other side, felt the colour mount to her face with a thrill from her heart such as her courtship, her marriage, and her widowhood had never brought her.

The blush passed, but the memory of that thrill seemed to change everything for her. It was scarcely to be wondered at that the suitability of a match with Lord Bertie Ewtree became a matter of insignificance. And how could she trouble herself to ascertain the state of a rather commonplace girl's affections when she was so fully occupied with the overwhelming discovery she had made concerning herself? It was a very absurd discovery—it was even humiliating—but at the same time, it was delightful to know that Love, who had always been a myth to her, should have become suddenly a serious reality. She could not even manage to feel ashamed that her heart beat faster for an obscure drawing-master—the son of a provincial solicitor.

"He is a heaven-born genius," she said proudly to herself; "that is what the world will have to acknowledge in him."

She saw the new light in her heart shining from the canvas as her portrait developed and throve. She wondered if he saw it too. Sometimes she thought he did, when he drew back from his work and looked at it long and tenderly.

Of what his feeling for her must be, she had scarcely a moment's doubt. To be loved was far more natural to her than to love. His reticence on the subject was also natural, considering their present relations.

So, at last, the picture was finished, packed, and despatched, and Wyndham, who intended to follow it to Paris and be present at the opening of the Salon and the voting of the jury, came to pay a farewell visit to Lady Patricia.

"We shall probably meet in Paris," she

said. "I shall come over when we have both become persons of distinction."

He had risen to go, but stood hesitating as if he had still something of importance to say.

"If it should be," he began slowly, "that I do get the distinction I hope for, I am going to venture to ask you a very great favour. I shall place my life's happiness in your hands—if I succeed, I mean."

"Would it not be better to ask me now?" she said, looking up at him. "Surely you know that my estimation of you does not depend on your immediate success!"

"Yours may not," he replied. "Unfortunately, the world contains few such as you."

With that he left her.

It was from the French art journals that Lady Patricia learnt the fate of her portrait. They were all loud in praise, both of painter and subject, and her ladyship fixed the date of her visit to Paris. Wyndham was expecting her there, she told herself, otherwise he would surely have written to her.

Before she started, however, she received an urgent invitation from Ursula Mainwaring, which, in a fit of remorse at her neglect, she accepted.

"Patricia, darling," began that young lady in a coaxing tone, as soon as they were alone together, "I want to have a most important talk with you, and I am so afraid of beginning. First of all I should like to ask you if Anthony has ever said anything to you in confidence about my marrying?"

"You surely would not expect me to tell you if he had," was Lady Patricia's reply.

"Ah, well, I can guess he has hinted as much. He has asked you to help him to talk me into accepting Lord Bertie Ewtree. Patricia, you have been a perfect angel."

"I don't think your brother would say so."

"Perhaps not, but, you know, you never would have talked me over, and as you didn't try I am able to speak to you about another matter much more important."

"Go on, dear," said Lady Patricia, as the girl hesitated.

Then Miss Mainwaring made a desperate effort.

"Patricia," she began, "I—that is, we—want your help with Anthony. He always thinks you are in the right. He will approve of any one whom you approve of."

"Ah," said Lady Patricia, smiling, "then there is some one else after all."

"Of course there is some one else," replied Ursula, blushing, "some one Anthony will think dreadfully unsuitable. But you are a friend of his. He told me so," continued Miss Mainwaring, growing ambiguous in the use of her pronouns; "he told me to ask you to plead our cause with Anthony. Look here," and she drew from her pocket a closely written letter, "this is what he writes. I got it last night," and she read: "'Of course some difficulties still remain, but my idea is to place our cause in the hands of Lady Patricia Kerr. She is a woman in a thousand. To me she has been a special Providence. I feel almost sure she will consent to intercede with your brother.' Now," concluded the girl, "can you guess who it is?"

"It is Lewis Wyndham," said Lady Patricia very calmly.

"Yes, it is Lewis Wyndham. We have had an understanding for more than a year; but you see he has been so poor and so handicapped. He will get on now. He has two commissions already—I was to tell you so—and oh, my darling Patricia, you will help us, won't you? Don't look so awfully serious."

"It is a serious matter," replied Lewis Wyndham's Special Providence.

"Not so very, very serious, dear. I know Anthony will do anything you ask him to do."

A little later, when Miss Mainwaring's engagement to a certain rising portrait painter was announced and caused some surprise, her brother took great pains to explain to every one that his consent had been wrong from him by the persistent persuasions of Lady Patricia Kerr.

"I shouldn't have been half so much astonished if she had told me she meant to marry him herself," he added on several occasions. "He's just the sort of fellow she would go and lose her heart to—only, much as I admire her, I don't believe she has a heart to lose."

THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah," "Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIX. SIMMONS IS EXHILARATED.

It has already been said that the Hundred and Ninety-Third was in a state of much turmoil and unrest. As time went on, this condition of things was in-

tenaified rather than allayed, for the most astounding items of news followed one on the other with lightning rapidity. Sadness, deep and pathetic, gladness and great joy, the rending of hearts already filled with sorrow to overflowing, the joy of hearts reunited after long severance—all these kept crowding on, jostling one another, as it were, to see who should get to the front and claim the most notice.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now," seemed one to cry; yet another: "Laugh with me, friends, that I have found Heaven's world so fair! Ring out, oh! joy-bells, that my happiness may find a voice;" and men's hearts were torn now this way, and now that. Here was Colour-Sergeant number one company, as fine a non-commissioned officer as ever "stood a regiment," pale and hollow-eyed truly, and very like what you might expect his own ghost to be, but still on his legs again. "If they were rather shaky legs, what matter? There he was, any way.

Hadn't they seen him with their very own eyes, driving in a carriage with a grand lady—a lady who might have been a queen by the look of her, and she smiling this way and that, and seeming so proud of the pale man by her side?

McMurdock swore mighty oaths as to the privileges enjoyed by those who had seen this sight; and as to Coghlan, when the Colour-Sergeant stopped the carriage, and spoke to him kindly and gently, being even still a little short as to breath, that worthy man's heart began to feel ever so many sizes too big for his tunic, his feelings ultimately finding relief in a mad rush to the canteen, and a treat to all the men who chanced to be there at the time.

Then Orderly Simmons got leave off duty, and came out of the hospital splendid and shining, his hair smooth and black as the raven's wing, his facings dazzling, and gave himself all sorts of airs. He swaggered into the canteen and began to gas about how well "we" had managed the case of the Colour-Sergeant, and how "our" patient was out of the wood, and on his legs again; indeed, Simmons seemed to have been in partnership with the doctor all through, in truth to have been the more important man of the two.

"The Colour-Sergeant," said Simmons, "quite in a providential kind of way, turned to speak to a little dorg, and so the bullet 'it 'is chess slantendicularly, an'

kitched the hedge of the lungs, in place of the centre, which would have been mortal, an' no 'opes to be 'ad. It was a matter of big wessels and little wessels, an' it hall hung on a thread, as the sayin' is. 'There's a chance for 'im,' says the doctor, 'but it's a reg'lar hinfant of a chance,' says he, and I was of the same opinion, mates. 'Lord knows,' says the doctor, 'which 'ull win—life or death,' says he, an' it felt kinder solemn, I can tell you, to hear such words; 'but we'll do our best,' says he, 'and with such a horderly as Simmons to hundertake the case as far as nussing goes, we're givin' the poor man every benediction,' says he."

Some of the men winked at each other over the edges of their pewters; but others were deeply impressed, shaking their heads gravely.

"But the hawfulest time of all was when they took his disposition," continued Simmons, revelling in the horrors he was relating, his cap marvellously on one side, and flipping his trouser-leg with his natty little cane. "I heard them read it out to him, an' it said as how he stated them there fac's believing himself to be a dyin' man, an' all that. I say to myself on the strict Q.T., 'Not if I knows it,' for I meant to pull 'im through if keer an' watchin' would do it. We didn't know then that if we kep' him alive he'd be a lord one of these days; and we wouldn't 'av' cared if we 'ad, for a man's a man, an' a life's a life, an' an' orspital's an orspital, where all are ekal together, an' none afore or after t'other."

This sentiment met with universal applause. Then a blight seemed to fall upon everybody. This man or that held his pewter upside down, and let the little bubbles of froth trickle down on to the floor. One or two coughed in a reflective and contemplative manner. At last a hatchet-faced, sombre-looking fellow, who had appeared to take an almost painfully keen interest in the discussion, or rather oration, for Simmons hadn't given any one much chance to get a word in, put into words the thought that had arisen like a spectre in their midst.

"It's a bad job about poor Harry."

A murmur that was like a groan followed. Harry the graceless, Harry the spendthrift, Harry who had been lashed like a dog, Harry who had sold his kit, what a favourite he was! The world is very unjust in these things; for some are terribly good and no one cares a rap about them, and some are always slipping and

tripping, and every one loves them, and tries to cover up their backslidings; ministers to them alive, passionately mourns them dead!

So young—and to have to say good-bye to life—having numbered only three-and-twenty years, and yet the knell must toll, the life be choked out of the young and lusty frame! Is there upon this earth a more terrible tragedy than that of capital punishment? The living, hearing, seeing, thinking human being, sound in life and limb, waking to the dawn of the day that means to him death by the hand of his fellow-man! It is a thought from which even the least sympathetic may well recoil. When such a fate comes to one you have seen and known day by day—whose face is as familiar to you as your own—what trembling horror must take possession of your soul as you think of the fate that awaits him? Can it be wondered at that the ranks of the regiment to which Harry Deacon belonged thrilled through and through when the verdict upon him was known to be that of death?

He was so young, so easily led, so weak in face of the power of his own fiery passions—such an irresponsible, reckless, dare-devil fellow!

Maybe if he had another chance, he would have made a better thing of life.

But there was to be no more chance in this life for Harry Deacon; he was to be hanged by the neck till he was dead—and might the Lord have mercy on his soul! He had had his chance, and lost it. The talk ran on in low-voiced short sentences; it was hard—hard—hard, they said; yet they were soldiers every one, and knew that the air had been murky with murder; that first at one station, then at another; officers or non-commissioned officers had been shot down; wantonly, too, and not because of any actual personal grudge or wrong. It was time that the authorities, military and civil, took some strong step.

Not long after this, a rumour, like a little breeze from the sea, began to creep and rustle in and about the Hundred and Ninety-Third. It had been known that the Colour-Sergeant's father had turned out to be an old boyish friend of the Colonel's; a fact that had been voted sufficiently interesting. Had not the two been seen walking about together, the one lean and lank, with eager face and soldierly mien—their own fiery, generous-hearted Chief—and the other somewhat portly,

dressed in priestly garb, and instinct with a gentle courtesy of manner that well became his sacred calling? Had they not been seen laughing, as they talked, these two—doubtless of the olden days, and the various escapades of each, or both?

"You bet they were a blithesome pair," said a sprightly young Sergeant at the Sergeants' mess, and the stately Sergeant-Major, stiff as buckram, puffed out like a pouter pigeon, relaxed his dignity somewhat, and gave a solemn guffaw, like the firing off of a minute-gun, then looked supernaturally grave. The Colonel Commanding as a schoolboy, and a mischievous one too, was an idea savouring of disrespect, it might almost be looked upon as mutinous.

But the enormity of this, and every other idea, paled its ineffectual fires before a new and wonderful rumour; a rumour that grew, and from a little breeze became a mighty gale. There could, indeed, be no doubt of the fact, marvellous and incredible as it might appear. Miss Alison Drew was one day to become the wife of this Colour-Sergeant number one company, who was in reality—or would be one day, it was all the same thing—a living lord. It may seem a strange thing, but it was, nevertheless, a fact, that these simple and hearty men saw nothing incongruous in this betrothal. Their social ideas were not very vividly developed, and to them it appeared a most proper and fitting thing. The Colour-Sergeant was the most excellent and popular non-com. that had ever been in their midst; Miss Drew was the best and sweetest lady. The thing commended itself to them as altogether desirable. In their eyes no higher honour existed than for a man to have his commission given to him. No doubt the Colour-Sergeant would thus have greatness thrust upon him. Then he would marry Miss Drew. When their wives were ill she would visit them; when their little children were laid low she would go and sit beside them, hold their little hot hands in hers, and, maybe, sing to them, as she did to Corporal Haywood's little girl, when the poor child lay stretched out straight after pulling the boiling tea-kettle over on to her little self. Of course the lady would play the organ at the Chapel as usual—no one played it like she did. Should they ever forget the Sunday when the doctor's lady was busy with it, and it set up a squeal like a cat with its tail caught in a trap, and took no less than three privates, two non-coms., and the

doctor himself to silence it! It would never do for the regiment to be left in the lurch that way.

But others took a different view of matters, and surmises and "you don't say so," and "well, I never" were rife. Some of these comments came to Alison's ears, and some did not; but do you think she cared any way?

A great sorrow, or a great joy, lifts us out of the reach of tongues. The pain, or the happiness, as the case may be, is so absorbing and intense, that every other thing around us is dwarfed, and grows indistinct and far away. What does it matter what people say? Nay, what does anything matter?

Then Mrs. Musters was a tower of strength. If she had had nothing to say to the matter, she would have been on fire with curiosity, and her tongue would have wagged as the clapper of a bell that is always ringing. As it was, she looked upon herself as one of the chief actors in the strange and romantic drama; and she took every one concerned in it under her capacious wing. No one dared say a word in her presence that might not have been said in Alison's.

"Of course it is all right now," said one daring female, "and nothing can be nicer, such a good family as the Claverdons, and such delightful people, and all that; but there must have been a time—don't you think so? Quite so——"

But Mrs. Musters's eyes grew round and totally expressionless, her mouth opened, and remained so; she looked like a dead wall, so perfectly dense was she in the matter of understanding the innuendoes of the other; and that was all that any one ever got out of her. The Hospital Sergeant was almost as reticent, and the scene in the ward, when Hubert Claverdon thought he lay a-dying, and listened to an angel's voice, became as though it never had been.

Save in the memory of two hearts, wherein its record was written in colours that could never fade or die.

What shall we say of the happiness that had now come to Alison? The clouds and mists of uncertainty had passed away, and the blessed sun itself was shining on her pathway. To one of her intense and concentrated nature, the joy that now had come was as keen as the pain that had preceded it. Yet she was very quiet about it all; and when Sunday came round she was in her place at the organ, as though

nothing strange or wonderful had come about since the week before.

But the singing did not go so well as before. Both the tenors were lacking, for Captain Dennison had gone on leave, prior to starting for India to join the corps into which he had effected an exchange. Not even to Elsie had her cousin spoken of her parting interview with Hugh Dennison; not even to Hubert Claverdon did she ever speak of it in the days to come. It was a sacred thing, this pure and perfect love that knew no earthly close, a memory that all her life long Alison treasured.

About this time it began to dawn on little Missy that there were more things in heaven and earth than she had dreamt of in her philosophy. She had a grave, sweet, contemplative look about her that was absolutely irresistible, and went about demurely, walking as though she trod on eggs. And in her child-heart were thoughts many and strange, for in the little circle that was her world, changes seemed passing, and hitherto unknown influences and individualities were making themselves felt. Between herself and Mrs. Claverdon a touching friendship grew; a fondness that was pretty to see, since each was so perfect in her way—the beautiful, stately woman, and the dainty, fairy-like child.

There had been no difficulty about the granting of furlough to Hubert Claverdon, and his father and mother had gladly taken him to a comfortable hotel in the city, where they could be more together. But this was only for a time; since, as soon as his health and strength would permit, they were all to start for Forrest-leigh.

Meanwhile, the lovers contrived to see a good deal of each other, and each day as it passed seemed to draw them more closely together. Of the change of fortune that had taken place in the career of Colour-Sergeant number one company, Alison spoke but little. Once, holding her close in his arms, and looking deep down into her happy eyes, Hubert said:

"Are you not glad, my darling, that things are—as they are?"

She returned his steadfast gaze, and her eyes were grave and tender.

"Yes," she said, "I suppose I am. It pleases everybody, and it makes Daddy and the mother happy, but I loved you, Hubert, just as you were."

Whether little Missy ever caught a glimpse of one of these tender encounters, which, truth to tell, were of frequent

enough occurrence, certain it is, as has been said before, she grew very grave and thoughtful.

At last, Missy spoke out what was in her mind. She leant her head against Alison's shoulder, and the long-lashed eyes looked up into Alison's face. But Missy did not ask a question, she stated a fact.

"You've taken my officer Sergeant for a sweetheart, Alison—good Eliza says so, an' Mr. Drummer says so—an' it's spoken of in the regiment—an' I say so my own self . . . an' Mr. Drummer's got his 'dulgence, an' he's goin' to marry good Eliza an' take her quite away, an' I do be very sadly—I truly do—and—Alison—Alison dear, will the officer Sergeant take you away too?"

Here was a pretty state of things! Little Missy, a white distressful heap, shaken with sobs, had flung herself into her dear Alison's arms; and the rest of the family, including Lieutenant Verrinder, were gathered round her in a moment, and each clutching at what they could get of her. It was perhaps quite as well that the "officer Sergeant" did not chance to be present, or he might have felt himself a miserable and guilty malefactor. It was also a good thing that little Missy did not chance to call to mind the scathing rebuke with which her own idea of taking the officer Sergeant for a sweetheart, had been met in times past.

It must not be supposed that the effulgence of her own joy and perfect content blinded Alison's eyes, so that she forgot to watch over the sorrows of others, or that the sad and silent little home that turned its side-face to the winding lane, knew her no more. Yet how helpless she felt, trying to comfort and sustain poor desolate Norah in her awful grief! Words seemed utterly powerless; indeed, the touch of a tender hand was, at times, almost more than could be borne. The tears might run down the furrowed cheeks of Father John; Norah's neighbours might keen and beat the air with trembling hands; but Norah's eyes were dry, her hands seemed no longer able even to be raised in prayer. Ever since that awful moment when Father John, shaking like a leaf, and clutching at the crucifix that hung upon his breast, had told her that her lover must die a shameful death, no tears had softened the strained misery of Norah's eyes. Those lovely eyes were dull and glazed, a great terror lurking in their

depths. It was as though she ever watched the horrible pageant of Deacon's death. Every now and then a tremor would pass over her from head to foot, and Phelim—never far from the mistress he loved in this her day of sorrow—would give a piteous, lengthened whine, and lay his ugly, faithful head in her lap.

"Arrah, whist now!" would some tearful neighbour say. "Shpake a word or two, me darlint, or iver yer poor heart burst wi' the pent-up sorror!"

And Norah would get up, Phelim following close, and wander into the wood, a weird, sad figure, passing slowly under the shadow of the trees, from which, every now and then, a leaf came fluttering slowly down, the first-fruits of autumn's harvest of death.

In vain the pigeons flattered and coo-rooed, alighting softly in the girl's pathway, with bowings and sweeping of tail-feathers on the mossy ground; she had no eyes to see them.

Only one vision was hers.

The white young face of her lover, with the brown eyes set fiercely, and the line of the lips showing blue, the last look on the world and the light of the sun, and then—the white cap drawn swiftly across it, the grating of the bolt as it is withdrawn, the sickening thud as the body falls and swings, the creaking of the rope as the weight stretches its coiled strands.

Over and over and over again comes the fearful vision. She sees it limned upon the curtain of the night as she lies sleepless through the silent hours; it is there on the sunlit air of the day-dawn; there as she kneels still and tearless in the chapel, and the people fall away from her in awe and fear.

Norah is not the only one who suffers. In the midst of all his happiness, even with Alison by his side, and her gentle, helpful hand in his, Hubert Claverdon cannot put aside the thought that the light of that young life will soon be put out for ever. Not one impulse of anger lurks in his heart against his would-be murderer. He would fain move heaven and earth to get the verdict reversed. He has talked the matter over from every possible standpoint, weighed every possible chance of a commutation of the punishment. He dared not—no one dared—speak of it to the Colonel. There is a deep shadow on the stern face—the life of a soldier is precious in the man's eyes—and yet, in his inmost heart, he is conscious of no

dissent from the decision arrived at by the court. He knows that in some sort Private Harry Deacon will die a martyr, since Hubert Claverdon lives; but in the army things have reached a terrible crisis; the lives of those who are set to rule must be protected; and, in this case, premeditation was plainly proved by the evidence of Private Perkins McMurdock. The thing is unutterably sad, but it is inevitable, and every one knows that the Colonel feels this, and every one pays the tribute of silence alike to his resolve and his regret. So far the day of the execution has not been made public. There is a general sensation of waiting for the announcement, like the catching of a man's breath; and it becomes known that the prisoner has been removed to Kilmainham Jail, and that there the last dread scene will take place.

And the time draws near for the Honourable and Reverend Claverdon, his wife, and son, to start for Devon.

Alison is with her lover, and has been telling him of her visit to Norah that day. She has told of the hollow eyes, the pallid lips, the changed face of the poor girl, of Phelim's patient, persistent devotion; and Claverdon, just touching the tendrils of her hair now and then, or laying a fond hand upon her shoulder, watches her changeable, speaking face, and thinks there is no other face like it in all the world! It is his star, his sun, the music, and light, and sweetness of his life! What can he do—even if Heaven grant him a long life to do it in—to show how dear he counts the treasure of her love, how all unworthy of her tender, womanly devotion he feels?

"As if it wasn't joy enough," he says presently, "to think of seeing my own

home again; of wandering in those Devonshire lanes that are like no other lanes; of listening to the sound of the old church bells that comes trembling over the pine-woods, but that it must all be made more perfectly beautiful for me, by taking you there with me and showing them all to you, my queen. Ah, Alison, do you remember:

Bid me good-bye, good-bye—

But she will not let him finish the line. She lays her hand against his mouth, and he sees the tears glisten in her eyes.

"Hush!" she says, with a little sob; "don't speak of that," and then—memory catching her, and holding her—she cries:

"Oh, Hubert! do you remember the shrieking of the fiddle on the hill?"

Does he remember? Can he ever forget if he live a thousand years?

"Do you know," he says, holding her hands as if he would never let them go, "even now sometimes I dream that it is like that again—I fancy I see you turning from me, as you did that night, your white face showing pale among the shadows, the sound of your footsteps growing fainter and fainter, and I making a mad struggle to follow you. I wake to remember all the blessed truth—"

"There is no good-bye any more now for me," says Alison softly, "as long as we both shall live."

And they are silent awhile. But there is a thing Alison has to say.

"Hubert—I want you to promise me something!"

"Is it a hard thing?"

"It is a right thing—promise!"

"Without knowing what it is?"

"Yes; without knowing what it is!"

"I—promise!" he says, smiling.

But Alison does not smile.

NOTE.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II. A KING AND HIS COURT.

PHILIP GILLBANKS had so lately been in the full swing of a busy and monotonous University life, that now having chanced upon this adventure he had some difficulty in believing that he was really in his senses. The day's long tramp had wearied him, and the cold and chill he had experienced on the fell—though his late scramble had considerably restored his circulation—caused him to say to himself, half in fun, and half in earnest, that he must be dreaming. The shepherd's talk about a Palace, a King, and a Duke, was, of course, easily explainable, only he was unable to explain it; and at this moment the river far below the tiny path, though invisible through the darkness, added to the mystery, for it splashed and roared between its rocky banks. Moreover, the glen was well wooded, and the trees bending over the foaming stream hid from too curious eyes its struggles with its rocky foe. Philip followed in silence not because he believed in the King's murderous rifle, but because conversation was useless unless carried on at very close quarters, and he felt too weary to shout so as to make himself heard above the noise. Following closely the shepherd's heels—and this in itself was not easy, considering that the countryman was not at all spent, and that the townsman was nearly exhausted—Philip at last saw that his guide paused before a small wicket gate.

Opening it he took a path directly to his left, leaving the river to roar on its way alone, and soon after the two emerged on what Philip fancied must be a lawn, beyond which a large pile of building suddenly hid the grey sky. A few lights twinkled in various windows, but they appeared only to add to the mysterious silence of the place. This silence was, however, soon broken when the shepherd, turning again to the left, entered a back courtyard. A furious barking of dogs and rattling of chains made Philip truly thankful that he was not alone, and still more puzzled as to the reason why this inn should look like a private mansion, and why the landlord kept so many dogs to guard it.

Suddenly he realised that this could be no common public-house, for the shepherd, leaving him in near companionship with the furious dogs, dived into a well-lighted kitchen, where he was soon surrounded by several servants, who, though not possessing the spick-and-span air of modern domestics, were certainly not the menials of a poor innkeeper. After some gesticulating and much talk, his friend returned to his side.

"The King's at heam, and Betty is gone to talk to the Princess, for the Queen's a-bed. She niver wad stop oop: ta t' bargain between the leddy and the King. Sometimes they differt and frach't, but no fowling on course."

What all this might mean Philip did not know in the least, and by this time he did not much care. The warm glow from the kitchen fire, and the smell of savoury messes, was more than his starving temper could stand.

"I don't know who all these people are, but surely this good woman will let me

dry myself a little, and give me some supper, and then I'll walk on to Meretown, if hospitality is not to be had at—this—farm."

"It's noah time o' neit ta loose yaw temper," said Jim Oldcorn, grinning broadly. "Yaw wad be a gay bit better i' bed and with victuals inside o' you, but if the King war to set his face agin it, wall, ye see, your condition wad be for getting warse and warse. Patience a bit, sir, for Betty's a neat lass and handy with haw tongue, and no doubt the Princess will tak' pity on you."

"Take pity! I can pay my night's lodging," said Philip shortly; but happily for his temper Betty reappeared. If she was unusually handy with her tongue she failed on this occasion, for she merely beckoned to the stranger to follow her. Philip turned to the shepherd and slipped a crown into his palm as he wished him "good night." Jim Oldcorn, however, answered with a grin on his face:

"No need, no need, sir, and I fancy you'll be here for a la bit langer; we'll meet again."

Philip sincerely hoped that he might not again require the swain's services, but repeating his thanks, he followed Betty through dark passages, till at last they emerged into a large, oak-panelled hall, very dimly lighted by one oil lamp.

Here Betty paused and looked at Philip's dripping condition.

"The Princess had better come and see you here, sir," she whispered.

Again Philip inwardly cursed the strange etiquette of these wild glen people, who could not allow a poor benighted traveller to come in and dry himself without so much ceremony and so many nicknames. Was he in an enchanted valley? Had he suddenly jumped back into a past age, or was he at some place more strange than respectable, which would turn out to be some den of iniquity, where robbery, and perhaps murder, were not unknown? The shepherd's talk gave likelihood to the idea.

No, the supposition was ridiculous, and Philip was about to make another impatient remark, when a roar of laughter rang through the hall, followed by a hurried sound of footsteps. Betty was visibly affected.

"It's the King," she murmured, "he's coming out, and I thought he was drinking for the rest of the night. Lor-a-mercy!"

"Hang it all," said Philip, "who is the villain they call the King?"

Suddenly a door opened, and the loud voice audibly preceded the person of the King. The next moment Philip was so much lost in astonishment that for an instant he was speechless. He saw before him a man dressed in the shabbiest fustian, much patched and discoloured. Closer scrutiny revealed, however, a certain indefinable something about the wild-looking personage which betokened gentle birth; besides, even the laugh was not that of a farmer, though the appearance was so poverty-stricken. The man himself was short and thick-set, with the look betokening enormous strength, possessed in a remarkable degree by some short men. His eyes, deep set under scrubby, greyish eyebrows, had in them a keen, cunning expression; his nose was straight, and went far to redeem the rest of his face, whilst his mouth was barely hidden by a short, iron-grey beard and moustache.

The roar of laughter he had heard was disagreeable in the extreme, or so thought Philip Gillbanks, who was, however, doomed this evening to have his mind disturbed by the sight of strange contrasts, for just behind the King came a gentleman who, not unworthily, might have stood for the portrait of a French Marquis. His dress, face, manners, attitude, and bearing were in the highest degree courtly. He was so handsome that it was difficult to believe he could be found in the company of the short, stout, ruffianly-looking man who walked in front of him. His dress was of the style long forsaken by ordinary mortals, and included knee-breeches, velvet coat, buckled shoes, and hair which, though not powdered, had the appearance of so being, for nature herself had lightly tinged it with soft grey. His beautiful hands were at this moment toying with a gold snuff-box, as he gazed politely but with a slightly astonished air at Philip's dripping condition, and then at Philip himself.

There had been a smile round this gentleman's exquisitely-shaped and clean-shaven lips as he stepped into the hall, but Philip noticed that the amusement was at once concealed, and he received a bow so courtly but so distant as to make him suddenly realise, though unwillingly, the foolish appellation he had heard. This must surely be the "King," and the other was his buffoon.

All these thoughts flashed themselves through the unfortunate traveller's weary brain as he returned the bow, and said:

"I must ask you to forgive my intrusion,

if this is, as I now see it must be, a private house, but I lost myself on the fell, and a good-natured shepherd directed me here, giving me to understand——"

The short man again roared with laughing, but the courtly gentleman took up the word, and to Philip's intense astonishment he said :

"You will, perhaps, kindly forgive the King's merriment. It is occasioned by no other than Jim Oldcorn himself, who gave us a short description of the discovery of the unfortunate situation in which he found you. I am sure the King will be delighted to give you to-night what shelter and hospitality you may require."

"What the devil do you mean by losing yourself?" was the King's rejoinder. "However, as it's so late and Meretown is not close by, you must stay here. Betty, take this traveller to the guest room, the small one, mind, and he'll find food in the dining-room; he'll want no looking after. I'm off, Greybarrow; Oldcorn says those confounded Richardsons have been up to their tricks again with my lambs, and I'm going to see for myself."

"Ah!" said the Duke of Greybarrow; "just so."

"If they think they are going to graze over my land, and then play their tricks with respect to my property, I'll show them the contrary."

"Just so!" repeated the Duke, and after bowing again, Philip found himself following the silent Betty down a corridor, then up some dark, creaking stairs, along another passage, and finally, nearly breaking his neck over two unexpected steps, he was ushered into a small room, smelling of damp or dry-rot. Beggars must not be choosers, but when Betty, having intimated that if he placed his wet things outside she'd see what she could find for him from the Prince's wardrobe, he was fairly mystified.

At last, left alone, Philip burst into a hearty laugh, promising himself the mental pleasure of giving a thrilling account of this strange adventure to his sister and to Forster Bethune.

"King, Queen, Duke, Princess, and now Prince! Good heavens! Is this a madhouse, or am I mad, or is the world gone forward or backward? When I was last in my senses it was Her Gracious Majesty, Lady Queen Victoria, who was on the throne of England, and there was certainly a Duke of Edinburgh, but none of Greybarrow. Well, I'm under cover,

anyhow; but the Duke! Certainly his brother, or uncle, or whatever relationship he accepts, should change places with him. The throne would really have been well filled by such a specimen of a true courtier. Let us hope the Prince takes after his uncle and not after his father. Besides, His Majesty seems to use unparliamentary language, and to have no objection to tramping out in this abominable rain. They are all mad, and I had better humour them and depart as early as I possibly can to-morrow morning. To-night it is impossible."

After these reflections, Philip undressed, and was not sorry, though again surprised, when the now familiar voice of the shepherd announced to him just outside his door that a suit of the Prince was thought by Betty to be just about the right size for him.

Philip opened the door, again laughing inwardly at the idea that the shepherd was also the valet in this extraordinary household.

"Yè two didn't differt seah much," said Jim Oldcorn, holding up a suit of rough garments.

Philip, being in no position to be proud, was nevertheless glad to see that the Prince's garments were certainly many degrees superior to those of the King. Indeed, they were much like the ordinary suit of a country gentleman who has no vanity and cares more for durability than for cut.

Philip was a tall, well-grown young man, possessed of pleasant blue eyes and an open countenance which at once inspired strangers with confidence. Shabby clothes could not turn him into a cad. To his unspoken relief he found that he really was not very unlike himself in these borrowed plumes, and he was glad of the discovery. A man in dry clothes looks out upon the world in a better frame of mind than when he is in a dripping condition. Indeed, this episode had so awakened his curiosity as almost to overpower his hunger, but not quite. So in a very short time he opened his door, seized the brass candlestick, wherein guttered a dip candle, peered about him down the passage, wondering if Jim Oldcorn were again going to act as valet, or whether the house possessed any more men-servants more in agreement with the courtly names of its masters, and started on a voyage of discovery.

No one was about and nothing was to

be seen. The wind whistled sadly in the eaves, and the rain beat against the window-panes. Phillip even fancied he could still hear the Rothery foaming, dashing and howling along its bed of rocks. How was he to find his way about this somewhat dilapidated Palace? Trying to remember his bearings he started forth, now only anxious to reach the spot where food was to be found.

After losing his way several times he found himself once more in the great hall, and then, recognising the door from which the King had issued, he boldly entered it. A lamp was burning on the table, and a clean plate was set. A large joint of beef, a jug of ale, a huge loaf, some butter, and a dish of custard were placed on the table. There was no footman, and nobody to help him, but hunger is not punctilious, and Phillip, feeling weary, but duly grateful, was soon eating what was before him as if he had not eaten for a week. Every now and again he burst into a low laugh at the bare recollection of the King's strange attire, and at Oldcorn's intimate knowledge of the duties of a "valet-de-chambre." After a while he had eyes for something besides beef and bread, and having helped himself to a large plateful of custard and jam, he was able to notice that the old silver sparingly scattered on the table would have filled a collector with jealous despair.

Certainly no mushroom family—and Phillip did not exclude the firm of Gillbanks and Son—would have had the chance to buy such things. Further, to his intense surprise, Phillip noticed that on each article a small crown was engraved, and beneath it was the motto: "Absolutus sum ignaviæ."

"I am acquitted of cowardice," murmured Phillip. "Well, anyhow, there is some modesty in that remark, though I suppose it means 'I am braver than others,' when the words are used under a crown! By the way, I wonder what is the name of this extraordinary family? The King of Rothery is certainly euphonious—but the man!"

Whereupon Phillip laughed again, and this time with such thorough enjoyment of the situation that he had to put down the knife wherewith he was helping himself to cheese. At this moment, to his shame and confusion, the door opened and a young man entered. Phillip had not a moment's doubt in his mind that it was the Prince. "By the cut of his clothes

shalt thou know the size of his brain," says an old proverb, and Phillip settled that, weighing by this measure, the Prince's brains were of no vast circumference. But he had hoped to find personal beauty, and in this he was disappointed. Though tall and broad, the Prince had no pretension to good looks; indeed, from the slow way he entered the room, the girlish blush that spread over his face, and the stutter that hindered the understanding of his speech, Phillip decided that the heir to the throne was, alas, more fool than knave. But there was a certain look of appeal for sympathy, and a certain nervousness of expression in the young man's face, which went straight to Phillip's heart, and which he could not account for.

"Excuse me," said the Prince; "I hope you have had all you require? We don't make much show at the Palace, but my uncle sent me to see if you are a smoker. If you cared to smoke he would like you to try this brand. I believe they are good, though I don't speak from experience, and my father only smokes a pipe."

Phillip had risen quietly at the Prince's entrance, and accepting the cigar with a bow, wondered how such a smoker as the Duke of Greybarrow and the Prince of Rothery could live side by side.

"It is very kind of—of—" he hesitated.

"The Duke of Greybarrow," said the youth simply. "I was forgetting you had not been introduced to my uncle. My father was so much amused by Oldcorn's description of your plight on the fell that he forgot to be civil."

The forgetfulness was fictitious, thought Phillip, slightly nettled, but it is impossible to speak your thoughts to your host, so he was silent.

"It was scarcely kind of the swain," he said, smiling, "to reveal the secret sorrows of a wandering bookman."

"Ah!" said the Prince, "you are from college, perhaps?"

He spoke as if this institution were situated in some fairy region, not easily discoverable.

"I am bidding good-bye to the Alma Mater, and before deciding as to my future career, I thought I would tramp a little among your lovely mountains; but even here my bad luck pursued me."

The Prince seemed to be searching in some far recess of his brain for an appropriate answer to this speech, but finding none, he hunted up some matches for his

guest and retired. In another moment, however, he returned.

"When you have finished your cigar, perhaps you will come and join us in the drawing-room. My father is out, but——"

"Thank you," said Philip, "but I had no intention of intruding myself into your——"

He could not say palace, so he paused, and the Prince, moving uneasily first on one foot, then on the other, seemed strangely disconcerted, till suddenly a bright idea struck him.

"I will come back and fetch you. My mother keeps early hours, but the Princess will be glad to see a stranger; very few ever come here."

The Prince managed to get out of the room in a hurried, shambling fashion, and Philip was again left to himself. He lighted his cigar, and walking to the window, he musingly watched the pouring rain beating against the uncurtained window, and listened to the melancholy howl of the wind.

Again he burst out laughing.

"What would Forster say to this? He would certainly be enchanted at such a novel adventure. Somehow or other he really must come here. A woman called a Princess would almost make him use bad language; for he declares that all women are born to be queens, and it is man's fault that sometimes they are something different!"

A RIDE TO LITTLE TIBET.

DR. LANSDALL has added yet another book to those he has already published about Asia. The earlier publications dealt respectively with *Siberia*, *Russian Central Asia*, and *Central Asia*, while this present book,* as its title denotes, deals with *Chinese Central Asia*, concerning which, particularly as to the relations between the Chinese and Russians, there is much of interest to be learnt. The object of the journey was to spy out the land for missionary purposes: to see what openings existed or were possible. Being advised that if he wished to travel by the Trans-Caspian Railway it would be advisable to first proceed to St. Petersburg to obtain the requisite permissions, Dr. Lansdell left London on the nineteenth of February, 1888,

for the Russian capital, calling on his way at Berlin on the Chinese Ambassador, from whom he received a letter, with the Ambassadorial seal, to the Governor-General of Ili, which was one of the districts which he proposed to visit. The first thing required at St. Petersburg was permission to travel as far by the Trans-Caspian Railway as possible towards Kuldja, which is a town on the borders of Russian and Chinese Central Asia. This, with the help of Sir Robert Morier, Lansdell was enabled to procure, together with official letters to the Russian Consuls at Kuldja and Kashgar, in Chinese Turkestan, and one from Sir Robert himself to the Governor-General at Tashkend in the Russian district. He also obtained permission to return to Russia should he, after entering Chinese territory, deem that a better plan than proceeding south into India. Before he received this permission, he had to draw up for official information an itinerary of his proposed journey, which, as it gives the route to which he principally adhered, it would be as well to give in full. It ran as follows:

"I expect to leave St. Petersburg tomorrow, or soon after, for Moscow; to stay not more than a week (for banking arrangements, etc.), then proceed direct to Batoum; from Batoum to Tiflis (stay two or three days); then to Baku and Askhabad (stay one or two days, perhaps); Merv (two or three days); Charkui (one or two days, to get, if possible, fishes, pheasants, etc., for specimens); Bokhara (about a week, to see places once again that I visited in 1882); Samarkand (three or four days); Tashkend (about a week, to purchase various necessaries); Vierny (two or three days to receive my luggage, sent forward from Batoum); Kuldja. I hope to arrive at Kuldja by May the first, and at Urumtsi by June the first, and then to meet my English interpreter, into China. If news reaches me that he arrives earlier, I shall hasten forwards; if I learn that he will come later, then I need not go through Turkestan quite so fast. I should like to arrive at Yarkand by September the first, and cross the Himalayas, and it is only in case of accident, sickness, or something important and unforeseen, that I should wish to return to Russia from Kashgar to Fergana."

Such was his plan, and over this long journey it will be impossible to follow him minutely, so we will simply select for notice any item of special interest or of difficulty. At Batoum he met his servant Joseph, who

* "Chinese Central Asia: a Ride to Little Tibet." By Henry Lansdell, D.D. London: Sampson Low, Marston, and Co., Limited.

had come direct from London with the heavy luggage, and soon after arrived at Uzun Ada, the western terminus of the Trans-Caspian Railway, where he commenced the journey through Russian Asia. At the place named Geok Tape the train stopped long enough to allow Lansdell to scale the walls of the fortress where the Turkomans showed such desperate resistance to Skobeleff. "The wall in some places is completely broken down, but enough remains to show what crude ideas of fortification the Turkomans possessed. Imagine a bank of earth thirty feet thick, finished on the top with breast-high inner and outer walls, and running for nearly three miles round a quadrilateral area like that of Hyde Park or Blackheath, but without their verdure, and you will have some idea of the proportions of the 'fortress' at Geok Tape." At Askhabad Lansdell met with more assistance from the Russians, one of whom telegraphed to friends in Merv and other places to help him as far as possible. Another stopping-place was at Dushak, which is interesting to Englishmen as being the nearest point to our Indian railways, and is only four hundred miles from the Caspian, while the distance between Dushak to the Afghan frontier is only as far as from London to Doncaster. When starting from Merv, where a stoppage of a few days was made, more Russian kindness helped Lansdell on his way. He had had all the way a separate compartment in the one second-class carriage on the train—there was no first class—and now from Merv the second class only ran on certain days, and Lansdell had fixed on a non-second class day. However, the authorities placed at his disposal a whole third-class carriage, "wherein, if there was lack of cushions, there certainly was not of room, my only companions being my servant Joseph, and a messenger whom Colonel Alikhanoff was sending on business to Bokhara, and who, he thought, might be useful on the way." When Lansdell arrived at Charyl on the Oxus, six hundred and seventy miles from the Caspian, he had come by payment as far as the line was then opened to the public, and was here assigned, "free of charge, a wooden hut or maisonette, with slanting roof, built on a wheeled platform." The hut contained two chambers about ten feet long and nine wide. Each room contained a bedstead, a table, and two candlesticks. In this the Oxus was crossed by means of a bridge six thousand two hundred and thirty feet long—the longest

in the world. The first stoppage was at Bokhara, where lodgings had been provided by either the Emir or the Russian Residency—Lansdell could not make out which.

Lansdell had heard before of the manner in which the insane in this part of the world were treated, and during his stay asked to see one of the houses where they were kept.

"It was an ordinary native dwelling, presided over by a sort of mullah doctor, who was treating his insane patients as 'possessed of the devil,' and was dealing largely in charms for all comers, consisting of extracts from the Koran placed in receptacles to be worn on the afflicted part of the body. He sat in his room near a window, and outside was a little crowd of ignorant women, many of them said to be childless, who had come to consult this man in their troubles, and pay for his nostrums. This was sad enough, but the sight of the maniacs was pitiable; the case of one man especially, Akhmet Kul, from Karshi, who had been there six months, and, although chained by the ankles, kept violently jumping and dancing about. Unlike some of the others, when I gave him money or sweets, he threw them into the air, and appeared decidedly combative. Near him, chained to a wall, was a youth who had been there ten days only.

"What is the matter with him?" I asked.

"Oh!" said they, 'he has a devil.' Whereupon I took from his legs the chain, which they allowed me to purchase.

"Passing through a doorway, I found myself in a stable in which was a donkey, and, seemingly as little cared for, two maniacs, one of whom was jumping and crying, the place looking indescribably miserable and filthily dirty. Sitting outside in the sun, but chained, was an Afghan and another man of unknown nationality, who was evidently vain of his appearance, for, before a small looking-glass, he was continually combing his long and plentiful hair and beard. There were others on a loft who had been there three months; but some only fifteen days, and in all cases their stay was intended to be temporary." Certainly the lot of the insane is not a happy one in Bokhara, and the same state of things is mentioned as existing in many other places visited by Lansdell. Jews in Bokhara still labour under considerable disadvantages. They may not wear

silk garments with belt and turban, but cotton garments and black calico caps, and many for belts have only pieces of string. They may not ride a horse in the city, and if away from the town when mounted on an ass they meet a Mahomedan, they have to dismount; while a Mahomedan may smite a Jew, but the Jew must not retaliate.

Soon after leaving Bokhara the then end of the railway was reached, and the journey to Samarkand had to be completed by driving, and from Samarkand Lansdell had a drive of one hundred and ninety miles before him before he could reach Tashkend. On the way he passed the ruins of an old caravanserai, supposed to date from the sixteenth century. At Tashkend a house was put at his disposal by the hospitable Russians, and here Lansdell had to withdraw from the bank the roubles forwarded there—banks not existing further east—and take for them rupee notes, which he was advised were more negotiable.

From Tashkend the route lay to Lake Tsaik-Kul, which was a big detour from the originally proposed route, which would have led straight to Vierny; but as the baggage, which was following, could not reach Vierny for several days, and as Vierny, on account of a recent earthquake, was not a convenient spot to rest at, it was determined to make the extra journey. Nothing of interest occurred while on the road to Tsaik-Kul or on the return to Vierny, save that Lansdell came upon a settlement of the Kirghese, a nomad race of uncertain origin. They believe in an invisible world; also that the tops of mountains are inhabited. "Sickness is the work of the devil, and the intervention of invisible beings in the affairs of men is accepted without question." They also venerate objects of extraordinary character. "Thus near Tokmak is an enormous stone of unknown origin with a human figure rudely cut on one side, whereon every Kirghese in passing thinks it obligatory to place, as an offering, a piece of tallow." They respect cemeteries and tombs, and go frequently to the cemeteries to say their prayers.

At Vierny a long wait had to be made for the baggage, and even then a start was made without it, though news was to hand that it was coming up; indeed, it caught up the travellers at Yarkend and was despatched on to Kuldja. At Yarkend horses were purchased and also a

cart, and a couple of Cossacks were lent as escort to Kuldja. Under their escort the frontier of Russia and China was passed, and Lansdell arrived at Kuldja on the twenty-first of June. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that Russia and China actually touch here, as perhaps an impression might exist that Mongolia, Turkestan, and Manchuria are independent states. In reality they are all Russian or Chinese. Lansdell thought that, despite the passports, he might have trouble in getting across the frontier. He had, indeed, been advised that it would be impossible, and that the only way of entry was by way of Pekin. But this is what happened.

"What the Cossacks said or did I know not; but the great doors with 'warders,' or painted dragons, flew open, my tarantass rolled majestically through, without my being stopped or, so far as I remember, asked for my passport, and in five minutes we were calmly driving through the fields of the Flowery Land, and among the Celestials, quizzing their pigtailed, and feeling on excellent terms with ourselves and the world in general."

At Kuldja the new horses and cart—"arba"—were found, as well as the luggage, and the journey was resumed to Suiting, the capital of the province. Here Lansdell made his first experience of a Chinese inn. He describes it as consisting of a large courtyard with rooms on two sides, with the third side and the centre occupied by horses, carts, and drivers. Foul straw and manure it was not considered necessary to remove, and through this he had to wade to his room, which was without flooring or any description of furniture; added to which the natives seemed to have no idea of privacy, and seemed to think it quite the thing to stroll in if they felt so inclined, while the windows were apparently, according to them, to be used to aid them in looking in, and not the occupants in looking out. In China, as in Russia, the authorities did all in their power to help him on his way, and having received further papers and documents, Lansdell returned to Kuldja.

Here preparations were made for the further start. The packages numbered fifty and weighed nearly two tons, including food, physic, clothing, furniture, books, maps, and stationery, instruments and arms, and presents. Osman Bai was engaged as caravan leader, and agreed to go as

far south as Aksu, a matter of twelve days' journey, and if necessary to Kashgar, and a start was made on Thursday, July the twenty-sixth, into Chinese Turkestan. Besides Lansdell, Joseph and Osman, there was an escort of forty-one, while Osman had three assistants to help him with the horses. A mountain range had to be crossed, and here, five thousand feet above the level of the sea, a few days' rest was taken at the gorge of Chapchal, where for their immediate neighbours the party had a small encampment of Kalmuks. Proceeding, a stiff climb led the party to the summit of the pass, from which the descent into the valley was easier and more gradual than the ascent from the north. From the Tekes valley, to which this descent led them, they had again to mount, this time the Muzart defile of the Tian Shan Mountains, which is a range one thousand five hundred miles long, and abounds in glaciers. In the course of this climb they came to a "black, tumbledown, smoky timber shed"—the last Chinese picket on the northern slope of the range, and here two of his escort left Lansdell to return home. After their departure the caravan proceeded to attack the Muz-davan, or Ice Pass. "The route leading up to the crest of the Muzart skirts the east of the Jalyn-Khatayr glacier, and, blocked more or less with large stones, winds along the flanks of the lateral rocks. . . . The crest of the pass is saddle-shaped, and about a third of a mile in length, presenting the appearance of a little plateau sloping slightly towards the south, and affording a superb view right and left of the magnificent peak of the Tian Shan. . . . From the crest the road proceeds southwards, the cliffs sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left, whilst between them lay a hollow with a flat bed, along which, in summer, streams trickle towards the south." Proceeding, they came across a huge glacier. "Scattered over this sea of ice are innumerable specimens of coloured marbles. . . . Deep down in the layers of ice flow streams which are heard but not seen. Here and there the ice is cracked and broken up into crevasses or ice-wells, into some of which I would fain have peeped, but to approach them was perilous, since a false slip might entail a fall into an abyss." Journeying along through this grand scene, at one o'clock was reached a spot, Mazar-bash, five miles from the crest of the pass, where the most trying part

of the journey was to be encountered. Mazar-bash is on the eastern side of the sea of ice, where the ice was broken off almost vertically, leaving a cliff forty to fifty feet high, down which the party had to descend. "Needless to say, I dismounted, and presently came to the top of the cliff, down the face of which we were invited to scramble. It looked as if blocks of ice and debris had been hurled from above, and perhaps the face of the cliff to some extent broken away, and steps cut here and there; but how to get down whilst maintaining the perpendicular looked well-nigh impossible." However, by sliding, stepping, slipping, and jumping, the descent of the men was safely accomplished, and then came the turn of the horses, which is described as follows: "I do not remember seeing any ropes attached, but my horse was taken by one man at his head, while another held him back by the tail, and thus steadied, he was made to scramble and slide on legs or haunches as he chose, till something like terra firma was reached at the bottom of the glacier." Lansdell was told afterwards that about thirty are sometimes killed making this descent in a month, while he has the proud position of being the first European to completely cross the Pass of the Muz-davan.

It would be impossible to minutely follow the caravan through Chinese Turkestan, and we must only briefly mention a few events which occurred before the party met with the last difficulty—the crossing of the Himalayas.

At Aksu a stay of some considerable time was made. Here Lansdell saw a body being borne to burial. "Unlike the staid procession of the West, this is done at Aksu with a rush. At death the chin of the corpse is tied with a cloth, and the thumbs of the hands are tied together as well as the big toes. Then the body, after being washed and laid out, is burned within twenty-four hours, mullahs at the cemetery reading the Koran." He also visited the prison, which he describes as one of the most horrible he had ever seen. The prison at Kashgar was also visited, but Lansdell thinks it must have been got ready for him. It was suspiciously clean, and the special red tunics which three men wore who were serving a term for manslaughter, and who had been in prison for some time, were too spotlessly clean and new.

But leaving the rest of Lansdell's journey in Chinese Turkestan—his visit to Yarkend,

and his expedition to the province of Khotan—we must hurry on to conduct him over the Himalayas safely into Tibet. It was on the morning of Monday, October the twenty-ninth, that the caravan left the village of Kilian to clamber over half-a-dozen of the high passes of the world; and after two or three days' travel arrived at the snow line. The thermometer sank at night to many degrees below freezing-point, and "to avoid chapped hands and face, I resolved in these latitudes to wash only once a day, and that in the afternoon." The party was now at an altitude above that of any road in Europe, and was about to cross the Kilian Pass, which cannot be attempted by horses; their loads were accordingly transferred to "yaks," which are a species of oxen. Lansdell found them sure-footed, carrying him safely over rough ground more smoothly and with fewer jerks than a horse, especially downhill. The road led upwards through snow more than a foot deep, and at three o'clock an altitude of seventeen thousand feet was reached, and the party suffered from mountain sickness. Lansdell found out what it was in a very practical manner, for having been told that there were some partridges a hundred yards off, he took his gun, alighted from his yak, and started running. "Before I had proceeded many yards, however, my heart began to beat as if it would burst, and I had to sit down twice, take breath, and learn that such agility at altitudes equal to the top of Mont Blanc was quite out of place." The cold, too, became more severe with the setting of the sun. If a cup of hot coffee was not gulped down at a draught, what remained became frozen in a few minutes, and the ink with which Lansdell was trying to write his diary froze between the bottle and the paper. After the descent from this pass the route lay for some way along plains to the fort of Shahidula, which was the last Turki building seen by the party, the next houses they entered being in Tibet.

From Shahidula the route lay towards the Karakoram Pass, for which a start was made on November the sixth. When the start was made the weather was delightful, and the sun warm, but in a few minutes in the shade, "necessary for taking a view of the pass, my fingers became so cold that I feared frost-bite. Added to this, we were rising again, and I was so exhausted with the trifling effort of undoing and putting away the camera,

that I had to sit down and rest. The least exertion became a painful effort, and after the day's journey I could do little more than sit in my tent, rest my head on my hands, and neither write, read, nor even think." The next day they ascended to the height of seventeen thousand six hundred and eighteen feet, while later on an altitude of eighteen thousand five hundred and fifty feet was attained. Although they continued on their way safely they were frequently reminded of the perils of the journey by the number of skeletons, chiefly of horses, lying about. A man they met told them he had just lost six horses in the Saser Pass, and further on they found a pilgrim from Mecca with his horse dead and himself starving.

This Saser Pass was the next to be attacked, and Lansdell says that though he considered he had accomplished something in crossing the Muzart, "the Saser was far more difficult; the ice was of colossal proportions, and around us still towered snowy peaks to a height of more than twenty thousand feet above the sea." From this pass their way led to the summit of Karawal Dawan, fourteen thousand one hundred feet high, and from here they could distinguish in the valley below cultivated fields and two villages—the first houses they had seen for many days. The valley was soon reached, but the houses turned out to be mere hovels, not to be preferred to the tent. On setting out the next day they were in Tibet; the first sign to Lansdell of his caravan being in Her Majesty's dominions being the appearance of a good pack road, from which the large stones were cleared to either side. After ascending another pass seventeen thousand seven hundred feet in height, Lansdell reached Leh, where he received a warm welcome from the Moravian mission. "I was put up in a simply furnished but perfectly clean room, and never in my life did I get with such delight between a pair of clean sheets; for I had not been in a proper bed for five months, and again and again, for whole weeks at a stretch, had slept without undressing. Here, too, after listening to Joseph's patois only for four months, I heard once more English properly spoken, and enjoyed the delights of Christian society and fellowship. I had now kindred spirits with whom to talk over missionary matters, which we proceeded to do, and to consider my plans for Lassa."

Here we will leave Dr. Lansdell, as an account of his voyage homewards would not be of any general interest; but before we finish our account of this book, it will be interesting to note the distance travelled, the modes of travelling, and the time occupied from London to Sonamarg in Kashmir. The time occupied was two hundred and ninety-three days, of which one hundred and forty-six were stationary days, and one hundred and forty-seven travelling days. The distance covered was eight thousand nine hundred and thirteen miles, which were covered in the following manner: four thousand four hundred and thirty-seven by rail, eight hundred and thirty-six by water, one thousand four hundred and nineteen by driving, one thousand one hundred and twenty-nine by riding, and one thousand and ninety-two by driving and riding. Another calculation shows twenty-five days by rail at one hundred and seventy-four miles a day; six days by water at one hundred and fifty-two miles a day; and one hundred and sixteen miles by horses at thirty-one miles a day.

ON CANNOCK CHASE.

CANNOCK CHASE is one of those famous hunting-grounds in which England abounded centuries ago. But it no longer sees trained hawk or deer: Its glory cannot be said to have wholly departed from it, for it has still square miles of heather and breezy hills unscarred by modern tenelements; yet it is sadly diminished. From the centre of it one marks the trails of black smoke trending from the tall chimneys of the town and neighbourhood of Cannock, and observes with grief the miserable cottages of Hednesford perched on one of its most conspicuous eminences.

Year by year it becomes more circumscribed in area. A century hence, unless an Act of Parliament intervenes on its behalf, there will be nothing of it left for the people at large. The pebbly tracks which now cross it in many directions will by then be macadamised into hard, even thoroughfares. Perhaps an electric tramway will rush across the existing wastes, linking one colliery centre to another. And where one now has a sufficiently pellucid atmosphere and fine, bracing, unpolluted breezes—unless the quarter of the wind is from the south—the heavens may be canopied with smoke as in the Black

Country of Staffordshire, a dozen miles or so to the south.

In its present state, however, the Chase is still delightful. It is best approached from Penkridge, that pretty little old village some six miles from Stafford. The ascent from the valley of the Penk to the ridge of the Chase is then gradual and endurable. The red houses are soon left in the hollow; the coppices and woods of Teddesley—once part of the Chase—swell on the one hand with, in October, gorgeous blazes of crimson nestled in the dark green bays where the hawthorns of the lodges are in the full garishness of autumnal decay; and the long, bosky ridge at the sky-line makes one doubt if there can be aught remaining of the open space of heather, bracken, and bilberry plants for which the Chase was, and, in fact, still is, renowned.

But the road climbs shrewdly past the coppices, in which the pheasants are chortling their unique note of alarm, and soon carries one to the girdle of fir plantations which is one of the prime charms of the district. The colours here in October are splendid. There can be no more alluring contrast of glorious orange and gold, and amber and clouded purple. The bracken and heather about the stems of the firs make a divine tapestry. Overhead the fleecy clouds are speeding across a background of heaven's own blue. The sunlight plays at hide-and-seek among the trunks of the trees, and the merry wind, full cool for the time of the year, sings through the fir-tops and bustles the moribund bracken somewhat rudely. In a hollow to the left a still pool reflects firs, clouds, and sunshine impartially. The high-road has all in a moment become a series of parallel ruts in the gravel, with grass and heather tufts between the ruts.

The fir belt traversed, the undulating Chase is attained: treeless and bleak, but on such a day beautiful withal. Even the rusted heather is not without grace. Instead of its dazzling crimson of a month back, there is a faint tender purple—an atmosphere difficult for the artist. They have set fire to the heath in many places. The result is strong: instantly recalling the slopes of Etna. The soil is turned a jetty black by the charred twigs and ash dust; and through this, new bracken in its spring-time verdure has shot upwards thickly. Here again the colour contrasts must be seen to be enjoyed aright. The

bilberry plants have gone red as blood. The older bracken strives towards every hue under the sun. It is impossible not to exult over this scene of dappled enchantment. For a few minutes, too, the sense of solitude is supreme. We have not attained the watershed of the Chase: the northern and eastern horizons are severed by the parti-coloured undulations, and behind, the fir belt still intervenes between us and the spacious landscape of the west, dominated by the old Wrekin. Were it not for the significant smoke-drifts from the south, the imagination might take this for a wholesome piece of the Scottish Highlands.

Two objects now declare themselves. The one is a red lodge set by the track a mile or so ahead, the other is a solitary birch-tree more to the left. The frantic barking of a dog in the lodge soon tells of the quick scent or hearing powers of the brute. When we near the building he is fain to snap his chain with rage. The apple-cheeked man who appears has much ado to stifle the beast's voice sufficiently for conversation. He represents the lord of Beaudesert Park, the demeane on the hill to the right, with its gaunt, wind-shattered trees in the dimples of the land. There are birds among the heather and manorial rights or pretensions to be maintained. Of late an attempt has been made to hinder pedestrians from roaming at large over the heather; they must keep to the dim tracks or suffer prosecution. The towns adjacent to the Chase are already protesting, and the issue of this final struggle over the almost dead carcass of this magnificent old hunting-ground will be interesting whichever way it goes. The squat houses of Hednesford show in the distance as a warning. All too soon, it may be, their fellows will be studded here also, where nowadays the partridges find tolerable entertainment.

At a meeting-place of six weak tracks we deviate by the next to the left after passing the stump of a sign-post. The Chase soon discloses more of its glories. The dimples between the hills get deeper. Sparse companies of birch-trees and oaks appear on their slopes. They have been terribly ill-used by the storms; this, however, does but add to their picturesqueness. The wooded slopes of the land on the north bank of the Trent are also visible, veiled by the rain falling heavily upon them. And looking north-west, a square dark mass of masonry is seen

quaintly peering above a long shoulder of the Chase in that direction. This is the top of the Keep of Stafford Castle, full seven miles away. The sight of this relic of a thousand years harmonises well with the view of the Chase itself, on which our early Kings sought—and doubtless found—good sport with their hawks and hounds.

Hence our track strikes sharply downhill between two rounded sides of moorland. There is a great two-horsed wain near, and men and women are seen cutting and gathering the crisp bracken. "It be rare good stuff for lighting fires," says one of the men. As fuel, indeed, it is always in request, whether coal be dear or at its normal price. A little lower down we clash with two women treading on the skirts of one of the little wooded tumps—as they would call them farther south—which on the Trent side of the Chase are a distinct feature of the district. "We'm only a-sticking," they say. The nose of one of them is for all the world like a sugar-loaf or a candle-extinguisher.

Down through the gravelly cranny, with the heather and bracken still thick about us, and the valley of Trent coming nearer at every step. Up go a covey of partridges and off with a whirr to the other side of the wire netting which here marks the beginning of more enclosures and plantations. One may carp at these nibblings at the Chase; but there is no denying the pretty effect of the knolls of beech-trees and firs which crest the little hills on this main declivity riverwards. The effect is enhanced, too, by the shaving of the bracken beneath them into squares and oblongs.

The valley air is much less of a tonic than that of the Chase; but the valley itself is worth seeing. Nowhere is the Trent more sweet and pure to the eye. It comes hither from the woods of Shugborough—where circumnavigator Anson was born in 1697—refined and good to see. A single swan breasts the stream close under the bridge, and its plumage is as white as the river itself seems irreproachable. The sun shines strongly on the green weed under the water.

The two old dames with their sticks joined us in the little inn up the lane. They were clearly brave-hearted old creatures. One of them, who appeared under sixty, confessed to eighty-three. She accepted a sixpence, with some doubt at first, but later with affecting gratitude and the words:

"It isn't often I meets with a friend now."

The parish was her best friend, at half-a-crown a week. But parochial charity is too impersonal a matter, it seems, to touch the hearts of its recipients.

Another excellent day may be spent by approaching the Chase from Lichfield, crossing it by Beaudesert, the seat of the Marquis of Anglesey, and leaving it at Cannock. This shows us the best charms of the district and also its greatest degradation.

Lichfield needs no crier to proclaim its graces. Who that has viewed its Cathedral from the farther side of the lakelet to the south, on a fine autumnal day, when the gorgeous crocketed spires, the foliage of the trees, and the shapes of the clouds are all mirrored impartially in the pool, will ever forget the old, yet ever rejuvenated building? It is as well, too, to bear in mind that this is Samuel Johnson's native city. There is an ugly monument of him in the market-place. It shows him seated in an arm-chair beneath which books—lexicons from their size—are most unconventionally and inconveniently stacked. He looks very miserable, as well he may, thus exposed with his beloved books to all kinds of weather. But though as a work of art the thing is poor, the statue will always be suggestive. There is better work in the Cathedral. Unless you have seen the two sleeping children at Lichfield you cannot have an adequate idea of Chantrey's powers.

Anciently, Lichfield was just within the bounds of the Chase. It is very different nowadays. One must walk three or four miles ere getting to its hem, and even then there are on this side no fine open expanses of heather as east of Penkridge. The lords of the manor shrewdly got their hands upon the land long ago. They have turned it into noble demesnes, or just helped Nature to continue in the path she trod here an indefinite number of millenniums back.

The three spires of the Cathedral are soon lost. The road north is extremely undulating, though with a smart general rise. Only in the occasional giant oaks, the firs, and the thick bracken in the hedgerows, do we see indications that this was once as wild land as that north of Beaudesert. It is not a very interesting road. But the higher we get the broader becomes the landscape north-east. Fields and woodlands for many a mile mark the vale of Trent

and its tributaries. At Longdon, four miles from Lichfield, we choose one of the three inns which seem to over-accommodate the village, and rest awhile. These rustic hostelries are always diverting. On this occasion the entertainment, though strong, is rather gloomy to boot.

Four men are assembled over their cups. It is the time of the Great Coal Strike. Naturally, this is their topic of talk. One of the men is a villager, another is a needy knife-grinder, a third is a collier from Yorkshire who has walked hither seeking work in the Cannock district—and—curious irony—the fourth is a collier from Cannock bent on walking north to see if there he may haply earn a livelihood. The hardness of the times is the one subject on which they all agree.

The villager of the four is a veteran, with a long and somewhat bitter tongue.

"Talk about your being half-starved and clemmed!" he cries to the man from Yorkshire, who has twopennyworth of bread and cheese with his beer, "could a mon as was hungry stop to scrape his cheese?"

For several minutes there is a clash of angry adjectives. The Yorkshireman does not choose to have his words and deeds so nicely measured. But the landlady interferes with a reprimand, "I don't hold with awearing in my house," and matters gradually sober.

"Well, well," says the knife-grinder, as if his was the vocation of peacemaker, "we'm all born."

"Ay," responds the Cannock man, "and some of us wouldn't be if us could help it."

The village ancient here rises laboriously from his corner, totters to the speaker and lays his hand solemnly on his shoulder, saying:

"You're right, lad, you're right."

Either this praise, or the sudden sight of the knife-grinder's machine at the door, sets the Cannock man upon the knife-grinder himself.

"Look here now," he says warmly, "tell me how to earn a day's money. I don't care what it be at, but I'm thirsting for it, fair thirsting for it. Tell me."

The knife-grinder, unawed by the almost ferocious earnestness of the poor collier, just draws the back of his hand across his mouth and remarks with a smile:

"Well, I'll tell yo'. Use your own judgement, that's the way to do it."

The storm that ensued upon this rejoinder was terrific. We left it at its

height. Village inns are not the enlightening places they once were, but even nowadays they ought not to be beneath the attention of men who wish to learn how the people in the provinces talk, and what they think about.

From Longdon we climbed by devious byways to the lodge gates of Beaudesert. The park was fascinating in its warm October colours in the bracing October air. The Hall is a mellow old building of purple-red brick, embosomed—in October—in russet and gold foliage. It stands well over the Trent valley, fronting the east with truly British indifference to the winds and weather. From the oak fencing of its park we see the spires of Lichfield once more, well-nigh seven miles distant. Nearer at hand are the houses of Rugeley, at the foot of the Chase, with the Trent watering its meadows. Rugeley's fame still centres mainly upon Mr. Palmer, the poisoner. There are plenty of people in the little town who remember him, and express their wonder that so pleasant-mannered a person should have come to such an end.

You will nowhere see pheasants tamer than those on the Beaudesert estate. Four cock-birds allowed us to walk unreservedly within ten paces of them in the high-road. Even then they did not protest against the intrusion with a noisy whirr of wings. Not a bit of it. They skipped lightly into the coppices on one side, and there they stayed pecking at insects in the grass. It seemed the easiest thing in the world to thrust a hand after them and grasp them by their tails.

More engrossing were the antics of a couple of squirrels, who tumbled each other about in the roadside bracken with the like disregard for bipeds. But when they departed they did it with a theatrical flourish. One—two—three—and they were high up the lichened trunk of an old oak.

You will find most kinds of northern trees in this park of Beaudesert, and bracken galore. Nothing more need be said to convince of its beauty in mid-October. The dead beech and oak-leaves are crisp under foot, and their pungent perfume is quite noteworthy. So, too, is the keen air of the Chase as we ascend and ascend until we are in the breezy outskirts of the park, where the trees are blown to bits, where they gradually become rarer, until they cease to be, and only the heather moorland with its fine lofty line against the sky is left to dignify the

Chase. And yonder, conspicuous in the midst of this upland reach, is the small red lodge already mentioned in the walk from Penkridge.

Hence to Hednesford is a good three-mile trudge. The heather gets more and more meagre on the Chase banks by the roadside. The dirty red houses of the colliers are more and more strikingly ugly. And the black smoke from the tall chimneys hovers between the blue and white heavens and the autumnal, dun-coloured earth. But for the strike it would be very grimy in Hednesford. As it is, the unfortunate colliers may be seen in knots, with their hands in their pockets, either discussing without enthusiasm or watching their more youthful brethren play pitch-and-toss.

There is nothing beautiful in Hednesford, and the Great Coal Strike has added misery to the prevalent uncomeliness.

THE PLEASURES OF GOLF.

I AM a foreigner—"tout ce qu'il y a de plus"—; but hold, my pen, thou art on dangerous ground! The British like not the stories with which they enliven their leisure hours to be interspersed with phrases which need a dictionary for interpretation. I am a foreigner. Enough! I am staying in a charming country house in Scotland with a dear old rickety-kneed General of my acquaintance, and I am learning to golf.

The country house is near a seaside town. It is March; it is windy; also sandy. Every day of my life I come home with more "grit" in me than when I went out. The day after I arrived General McShallop said to me: "You can't go back to your own country without knowing everything there is to know about golf. Not to golf is not to live. We will go for a turn on the links to-morrow."

Some people say that to-morrow never comes. They lie. It does, as I know to my cost.

There are some very charming girls staying in this same country house. One likes naturally to distinguish oneself in the presence of fair Amazons. I was, therefore, rather averse from the idea of learning a somewhat difficult and dangerous game before them. I had ascertained that they all started with the men in the morning, and came home with them to lunch; that they scorned the humble limits of the ladies' links, and preferred to go the whole

breezy round. Finding that I was in for it beyond a doubt, I not unnaturally asked my host for some account of the game, which I had never seen played in my life.

Now, golf is more than a game or a science. It is a fever and a passion. It was with some curiosity, therefore, that I listened to General McShallop's exposition of the same.

"You place your ball on a small mound of sand called a 'tee,'" he explained in as simple language as he could, in kindly deference to my imperfect knowledge of English, "and you hit it with your club."

Then he paused for such a long time that I began to think that this was the Whole Duty of the golfer, and spoke accordingly.

"Is that all? What do you do then?"

"You walk after it and hit it again," said the General solemnly.

There was another pause.

"That sounds easy," said I, with a sigh of relief, and speaking like a fool in his folly.

"It sounds easier, perhaps, than it is," said my host, with a ghastly smile. "Have you ever heard of 'bunkers'?"

I never had, although there vaguely flitted familiar wise across my mind the battle of Bunker Hill.

"When you strike off," said the General, leaving the subject of bunkers as one too painful to be proceeded with, "you see a road at some distance before you. The first difficulty for a beginner is to get over the road. Then you come to a steep incline, half rock, half grass. For this you will need a different club."

"How many clubs must I have?" I asked meekly.

The General made a rapid calculation.

"You can have thirteen," he answered.

"The Driver, the Bulger Driver, the Long Spoon, the Mid Spoon, the Short Spoon, the Putter, the Brassey, the Cleek, the Niblick, the Driving-Iron, the Putting-Cleek, the Lofting-Iron, and the Mashie; but then again, you can manage with very few if you like. To begin with, I should only recommend four—the Driver, the Cleek, the Putter, and the Lofting-Iron."

My brain reeled. I hastily abandoned the discussion of clubs and returned to the game.

"After you have driven off, and got over the road and the hill," I asked, "what then?"

"Then you see a red flag in a hole," said the General, as if this were a full, sufficient, and lucid explanation enough.

"I see. And then?"

"You 'put' the ball in," said the General, in astonishment at foreign ignorance. "And then you pick it up," he added, in fatigued anticipation of another question, "and make another 'tee,' and drive off again—over a bunker this time—and then there is a sort of hollow marah which you must avoid, and then another bunker, and after that a burn—in which you are certain to lose your ball—and then a high stone wall, which very few beginners get over at first; and then there is the little ruined house, where the green-keepers have their tools, and which very often catches one's ball when one is not careful; and then——"

I stopped him. His rapid description appalled me. The golfing course appeared to be a kind of "Pilgrim's Progress" to me, with bunkers for Apollyons, and stone walls and burns for the Hill of Difficulty. I became "tumbled up and down in my mind," as John Bunyan hath it. Where did the Land of Beulah come in?

"And what is the end of the game?" I asked.

"When you have been the round, of course. Those who get into the holes in the fewest number of strokes win the game," said the General in a tired voice.

I have always been rather celebrated for getting into holes of a mental description in very few strokes indeed, so I did not despair yet about golf. It did, indeed, at first sight, and to the ignorant, appear a somewhat peculiar pastime, but as all Europe was going mad over it, and marking out ridiculous little golfing-grounds when and where it could, and as I was on the real spot where the real game was played, I determined not to lose the opportunity.

The morrow came, my host in fine form and knickerbockers, and the young ladies in business-like short skirts and Tam-o'-Shanter caps. It is a pity that this style of dress does not suit all girls—but there, the sex is always charming, even under the most disadvantageous circumstances.

One of the young ladies took pity upon my evident trepidation at breakfast time, and offered to break me in all by herself in an artless and charming manner, which would be impossible except in Britain.

"For, General McShallop," she added archly, "you know your foursome is made up, and as there are five of us girls, Monsieur de S—— and I will be left out in the cold, unless we play with each other."

This arrangement met with universal satisfaction. I could see that the foursome had been trembling in its shoes at the idea of having an ignorant stranger tacked on to it. For golf is also business.

As for me, of course, I am always pleased at the prospect of a tête-à-tête with one of Albion's fair daughters, especially when she happens to be the prettiest girl of the party. We started at last, the others well on in front, and Mademoiselle and I well behind. We walked over the coarse, sand-grown grass towards the little golf club-house, and the salt air blew sweet and strong in our faces.

Arrived there, I provided myself with the balls, the four requisite clubs, together with a seedy-looking caddy to carry the same, and we "started fair."

At this moment my pen arrears itself. That day, long ago now, comes back to my mind in all its vivid freshness. The blue, blue sea, the salt, breezy wind, the green links picturesquely dotted about with the scarlet jackets worn by some of the golfers, the pretty face of the girl by my side, the sordidly dressed caddy in the rear, and before us two nice little, clean white balls on two small mounds of sand, waiting to be launched into space.

My companion struck off first. She was playing with a cleek only, and it flashed brilliantly in the sunshine as she swung it high in the air. The ball vanished, became a mere speck, and then fell lightly and gracefully where all right-minded golf balls should fall—on the other side of the road.

It was now my turn. I received instructions how to place my feet, how to hold my club, to keep my shoulder always in the direction of the hole.

"Where is the hole?" I demanded haughtily of the caddy, when I was well fixed in a firm and rigid position, with my driver clasped with the tightness of despair.

"It's awa' over the hill," he answered briefly; "ye canna see it fra here."

I prepared to strike.

"Lift your club slowly and bring it down quickly," said my fair companion, contemplating my statue-like attitude with a smile.

At this moment the caddy knelt down and officiously turned my toes in, adjusted the ball, looked critically at my thumb, which he tucked round the handle of the club, and rising, kindly allowed me to play.

I struck with the strength of a navvy. I expected to see the ball lost in space, but on looking down, I beheld it still reposing in all its snowy whiteness at my feet.

I was readjusted by the caddy, and required to assume an attitude in which I could hardly keep my feet. Again I struck—this time scattering the "tee" to the winds and ploughing a long furrow on the links. I had dugged a pit and fallen into the midst of it myself. The caddy frowned as he replaced the turf, and we journeyed on. I had not far to go—barely half-a-dozen yards in fact—and began to find being placed in position each time fatiguing. I waved the man aside, therefore, and struck my own way. This time I fell into the deepest rut in the road. My companion was very kind and encouraging, but it took me eight strokes to get to where her ball lay. Then she played again and lifted it easily and gracefully on to the hill, whilst I followed after as best I could. I found the hole with the red flag, and went in in thirty-four. I believe it has been done in three.

From thence I pursued my unhappy flight from hill to vale, from burn to bunker. I lost two balls in the burn, and as for the bunker—I went down into the pit alive.

I sent the caddy on ahead after my companion, preferring to potter about alone. Whenever they were not looking, I picked up my ball and carried it along, finding that by so doing I could golf much faster, and, indeed, almost keep up with Mademoiselle.

"You have improved," she said to me on one occasion, when I arrived on the putting-green in eight strokes, having carried my ball all the way from the last bunker.

And I admitted that I had.

After the burn came the wall—a great stone affair which you fired at from an eminence in the hope of destroying it. Many savage blows has that wall endured in its day! Indeed, Puritan as one might suppose the Scotch links to be, I have heard language used thereon which would not disgrace Whitechapel on a Sunday night. But golf, like love, excuses all.

Beyond the wall lay a smooth putting-green, then another wall, then—but why enumerate all the deadly obstacles placed in the way of harmless, peaceable individuals who wanted to golf and enjoy themselves in a sensible manner? Had

the valleys been exalted and the hills made low, had the crooked been made straight and the rough places plain, we might have managed the game fairly well. As it was——

"How do you like it?" asked Mademoiselle, as we came back on the homeward course.

"Immensely," I replied, as a ball whistled past my ear, narrowly escaping braining me. "There are elements of difficulty and danger about it that render it the most fascinating of games."

There was a large 18 on the iron flag which marked the hole before me. I went in in eighteen strokes, and felt proportionately triumphant, until it was pointed out to me that the eighteen referred merely to the number of the hole, and not to the strokes supposed to be played.

"We will come again to-morrow," said my fair companion cheerfully, picking up her ball. "You will soon get into the swing of it."

I walked home rather sadly, and my dreams that night were of yawning chasms, of desolate sea-shores, of rapid rolling rivers bearing fated golf balls on their bosoms, of insurmountable stone walls that rose, like Fate, ever higher between the golfer and the Promised Land.

The General and his foursome came home in high spirits. They talked during luncheon of cleaks and niblicks, of "going in in four," and of the hard tricks that destiny had played them. Immediately after lunch they started off again, faint yet eager. For golf is also life.

Mademoiselle and I stopped at home and played billiards. Is there anything a British maiden cannot do?

The next morning I was not ill-pleased to see from my bedroom window that a light snow had fallen during the night, and wrapped the earth in a soft shroud of cotton wool. I descended gaily, like the troubadour of old, with the thought in my head, "No golf to-day."

Alas for the ignoble foreigner and the energetic British!

"No golf to-day," I said aloud to my fair companion of the Tam-o'-Shanter.

"No golf!" she echoed; "why not? General McShallop is going out as usual."

Of course if a rickety-kneed, white-haired old General could do this thing, I, even I also, was bound to pin my colours to the mast.

"Shan't we lose a good many balls in the snow?" I objected feebly.

"We shall play with red ones," she answered decidedly. "It is great fun."

We certainly did play with the red balls, but I am not quite so sure about the fun.

In a week's time, during which we golfed daily in all weathers, I began to learn that familiarity breeds contempt. I no longer trembled before the rutty road; I surveyed the steep incline with calmness; the wall, the burn, and the bunker had all lost their terrors. I spoke in assured tones of clubs and their uses. I assumed professional attitudes, put aside my caddy with a haughty hand, and wriggled in a truly professional manner. For, to golf, you must wriggle and tie yourself into as many knots as possible, and the more you writhe the better you will play. I became finally calm enough to scrutinise the other players on the links. They were always the same set, feverishly worshipping at the shrine of their idol. There were a great many Majors and Generals and such small deer scattered about. I suppose the golfing links, with their flying, whistling balls, vaguely recalled the hiss of the bullet on the battle-field to the veterans' minds. Perhaps, too, here is to be found the oddest mixture of society possible anywhere. Pride of class disappears where golf is concerned. I have seen a Baronet golfing with a butler. Who would think of calling in "Jeames" to have a game at billiards if a more kindred soul were wanting?

Accidents, of course, occasionally happen, but they are of rare occurrence. One day, a week before I returned to my native country, my original companion and I were golfing together alone. Suddenly she gave a little shriek.

"Oh, dear, I have lost my head!" she exclaimed.

I had assured her that this was a thing I often did, before I understood that she was referring to her club, which lay headless before me. She was looking very pretty indeed just then, with a bright colour in her cheeks, and all her fair hair blown about her face. I took hold of the stick, and we held it between us. It was rather romantic. I became sentimental.

"I have lost something worse than that," I murmured.

"Not your ball again, I hope?" she interrupted rather sharply.

"No——my heart——"

She loosed the stick and looked me straight in the eyes. Really, there is a frank and unabashed candour about these British maidens that—

She did not pretend to misunderstand me.

"I am going to have my head put on in the right place again," she remarked as she walked away from me. "I should advise you to do the same thing with your heart. Cracked things always last the longest."

Four weeks of uninterrupted and delightful intercourse had brought me to this! For calm audacity and unfurried presence of mind, this enchanting specimen of womankind had surpassed herself.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of—golf!

DOCK LIFE.

DOWN in the busy east of London, where the steady rumble of heavy vans laden with merchandise, the whirr and clang of cranes and the rattle of winches, resound always in the ears of the passer-by, stand two large gates, which are the entrance to the Mecca of the East End labourer. For here are the docks, whose business, directly or indirectly, gives employment to a great proportion of the lower stratum of dwellers in the east.

Every morning—at seven in winter, and six in summer—an eager throng pours through these gates, and surges up to the iron chains which span the wide roadway some hundred yards within. The space between these chains and the gateway is soon packed with several hundred "dockers" clamouring vociferously to the "taking-on" foremen, standing in their little pulpits high above the crowd, for the tickets whose possession gives them a day's work. Hundreds go away unsatisfied, for there are at least three applicants to every vacancy, and seek consolation in the neighbouring pubs, or hang around the dock gates on the off-chance of a second "call" at nine or ten o'clock. The comments of these disappointed individuals as they loaf away dejectedly are often characteristic.

"'E ain't no bloomin' good to a working man, 'e ain't," says one burly docker, with a straw in his mouth, pointing the finger of acorn at a foreman who has made up his tale of labour without including the speaker, "taking on all boys agin this mornin'."

"Blowed if yer ain't right, too, Jim," assents another disappointed applicant, a rat-eyed, waspish little man, with a terrible reputation for sarcasm as it is understood in Wapping. "Lor' bless yer, I could make a better man nor 'im outer two sticks an' a lump o' coal." He expectorates vigorously as he finishes this tirade, and then wends his way with the rest of the discontented mob to the gates.

Those who have been more fortunate in securing the coveted ticket are now distributed throughout the docks. According to the necessities of the authorities, they are told off to the wool warehouses, the wine vaults, the dry goods stores, the open quays to which goods are transferred from vessels lying alongside, or down to the inmost recesses of these vessels, to assist in breaking-out their cargoes. Of all these various employments, the last is the most dreaded, and only seasoned dockers can stand it for any length of time, the strain upon the constitution being most severe. Working thirty feet down in a ship's hold, in semi-darkness, surrounded by a stifling atmosphere, and with the body never for a moment during the whole day in an erect position, is no joke, as the present writer can assure any one who wishes to try the experiment. Fortunately the same men are seldom required to work more than two days a week at this particular task.

The other kinds of toil, especially those conducted in the warehouses, are by no means so exacting, and many a pipe is smoked, and many a gallon of beer drunk behind those huge bales of wool which periodically fill every floor of huge buildings extending over several acres. Both these descriptions of amusement are of course strictly forbidden by the Dock Company's regulations, and many are the devices resorted to by ingenious dockers to indulge in these tabooed delights. Both ale and rum are brought in wholesale in harmless-looking tea-cans, which are seldom examined by the dock police at the gates, and these go backwards and forwards for replenishment all through the day. A new hand is generally selected for the somewhat perilous task of running the gauntlet with these forbidden luxuries. No labourer is allowed to leave the docks—except for dinner—during work-time without a written permission from his foreman. The faces of the old stagers, those who come every morning, week after week and year after year, are

of course well known to the dock police, and they dare not run the risk—even to obtain beer. But the new hand, whose face is not yet familiar to the dock officials, and who has not yet acquired the indefinable stamp of the regular docker, is the very man for the purpose. So by judicious coaxing, intermixed with a little judicious bullying, the new-comer is persuaded to fill his pockets with these innocent-looking cans, and to stroll aimlessly out of the docks to the nearest tavern. Once safely outside return is easy and without risk, if the "runner," as he is called, is not known to the police. So many people enter the docks daily on various errands that scarcely any notice is taken of them. While the "runner" is absent, his comrades cheerfully do his work, and conceal his departure from the foreman. If he be a very green hand, he will be kept busy at the same errand all day long, as dockers are thirsty souls, and every "runner" has his day. After a week or two the risk of detection increases, and a fresh Mercury has to be found. The regular fee for each successful trip is "half-a-pint," or a penny in cash, and a new hand finds it easy to earn a couple of shillings a day at this work, while he is also being paid sixpence an hour by the Dock Company. Until one has actually tried the experiment, no one would believe the number of bottles and flat tin cans which can be stowed away in a rough pea-jacket, especially if a ragged overcoat be put on over it. An expert "runner" will safely convey a gallon of beer and several small bottles of rum every journey.

The regulations against smoking are still more strict than those against drinking, and are more difficult to evade. Still, a good deal of surreptitious homage is paid to the goddess Nicotine in the various out-houses and so on, one of the gang being told off to keep watch for any prowling constable. Most dockers also indulge in chewing, which is permitted, and so manage to satisfy their craving for tobacco in a legitimate manner. It is, by-the-bye, an offence under the Company's bye-laws for any labourer to have in his possession either pipe or matches, so the old stager conceals his cutty in some warehouse, and carries his matches in his boot!

What has been said above is ample proof that the docker is a man of resource, and fully understands in his own humble way the art of living. He carries the same principle into his work; he regards

it as a necessary evil, and does not do one iota more than he can help. Foremen vary very much in disposition, but most of them recognise the advantage to themselves of having plenty of men for the work in hand, as things go more smoothly, even if the Dock Company's pocket suffers. One day a foreman in a particular department found that after dinner he had absolutely no work for his gang to do. While his men were enjoying their enforced idleness, suddenly the awful tidings came that the dock superintendent, with several directors, were making a tour of the docks, and were even then in the next warehouse. The foreman was in despair. What was to be done? An old and astute docker approached him, and a whispered colloquy ensued. The result was soon apparent. The men had that morning been engaged in repairing gunny bags to hold rice. These, all finished, were piled up neatly at one end of the floor. In five minutes they were all ripped open again, and when the big-wigs entered the warehouse, four-and-twenty men were industriously engaged in sewing them up again!

A good deal of smuggling and petty thieving goes on daily at the docks, not that the average docker is worse than other labourers, but because smuggling especially possesses an inherent charm for him out of all proportion to the value of the articles surreptitiously conveyed out of the docks. Many good stories are told of the ingenious manner in which both constables and Custom House officers have been outwitted. One foggy day, a docker working aboard a vessel in the Central Basin had the ill-luck, apparently by accident, to fall overboard. He could swim, but it was some little time before he could be got out, and he then seemed almost done up. All cold and exhausted as he was, his sympathetic chums placed him on a plank and soon ran him out of the docks to a neighbouring public-house. There he was stripped and put to bed between hot blankets. As soon as he recovered, he evinced an uncommon anxiety as to the safety of his clothes, and no wonder, for the linings of his pea-jacket and baggy corduroys were the receptacle for some fifteen pounds of tobacco, done up in waterproof wrappings. This was eventually purchased by the owner of the tavern.

Dock labourers are a democratic lot. They have but little respect for their foremen or even for a dock director, and none at all for each other. Some time

ago a docker was charged at Thames Police Court with attempting to commit suicide. He had been seen in broad daylight to jump off the quay into the South Dock. An eye-witness, a fellow-labourer, was called to give evidence.

"Did the prisoner deliberately jump into the water?" asked the magistrate.

"Well, as to that, howsomever, I can't say, but I'll go bail for it 'e never meant to commit sewerside. 'E can swim as well as I can. 'Sides, 'e's too precious fond of 'is bloomin' life to risk it while he can borrow a bob of any one. A lazy, good-for-nothing 'ound, that's what 'e is!"

The prisoner was eventually dismissed with a caution.

In conclusion, let not the reader fancy from the above brief notes that the docker's life is one of unalloyed bliss. He has his bad days when, wet and cold and hungry, he loafs aimlessly about the dock gates, waiting for work which never comes. He is poorly paid at the best of times; he has little leisure when at work, he is indifferently lodged, and the finer joys of life are not for him. Small wonder if at times he seek refuge from the monotony of his existence in the coarse pleasures of the beer-shop and gin-palace. Small wonder if his intellect, denied all legitimate vent, is turned to deeds of low cunning and doubtful morality.

THE ABDUCTION OF A KING.

THE abduction of Stanislaus Augustus, King of Poland, in the very midst of Warsaw, his own capital, was probably as audacious an exploit as any body of conspirators ever conceived or accomplished, since at the last moment the King effected his escape, but in its earlier stages the attempt was completely successful. The instigators of the offence were the confederated Polish nobles, who had never recognised Stanislaus as lawfully elected; and, not without reason, looked upon him as the mere tool of Russian tyranny.

The man who planned the details of the abduction was the celebrated Polish patriot, Pulaski. He it was who engaged a body of forty adventurers to carry it out, under the leadership of three daring men, Lukowski, Strawinski, and Kosinski, whom he had won over, and who had sworn to deliver up to him the King, dead or alive.

Making their way by stealthy journeys

from Czitschokow, in Great Poland, they entered Warsaw, on the second of November, without having been discovered. They were disguised as peasants in charge of carts loaded with hay, under which were concealed their saddles, weapons, and ordinary dress.

They did not all penetrate into the heart of the city; some remained at the gates. The others, on the following evening, collected, with due precautions, in the Street of the Capucins; for they calculated, "from information received," that the King would pass that way on returning to his Palace at the accustomed hour.

And so it happened.

Between nine and ten o'clock, leaving the residence of his uncle, Prince Czartoriski, to whom he had been paying a visit, the King drove into the trap prepared for him. His escort did not exceed some fifteen or sixteen grooms and troopers, and an aide-de-camp rode with him in his carriage.

Suddenly a number of well-armed men sprang out of the darkness, and surrounded both the carriage and its escort, ordering the coachman to pull up. Before he could obey a shower of bullets clattered about the vehicle, and struck down an equerry who had posted himself on the doorstep to defend his master. The escort had fled at the first shot; even the aide-de-camp was gone; the King was all alone. It was a pitch-dark night, and he attempted to profit by the darkness; but before he had taken half-a-dozen steps, a rough hand clutched hold of his hair. "We have you now," cried the man who had stopped him; "your hour is come!" and a pistol was discharged so close to his face that he afterwards said he could feel the heat of the flame. At the same time a sabre-stroke was aimed at his head, and cut through his hat and hair to his skull. Meanwhile the conspirators had remounted their horses; two of them seized his collar and dragged him on between them, while they rode at full gallop, five hundred paces through the streets of Warsaw.

The alarm had by this time been given in both the Palace and the city. The guards hastened to the scene of the outrage, but discovered only the King's hat, soaked in blood. It was at once concluded that he had been killed, and his dead body carried off by the murderers; the city was filled with all kinds of dreadful rumours.

The King was soon breathless and ex-

hausted with the cruel treatment to which he had been subjected. He was unable to stand, and his captors were obliged to mount him on horseback. They then proceeded at a still more rapid pace. On reaching the city gate they found it closed, so that the only means of escape was by leaping the ditch. They did not hesitate. The King was of course compelled to follow their example. He pushed his horse forward, but he fell in the middle. A second attempt, a second failure; and the poor animal broke his leg. Stanislaus was dragged out covered with mud and greatly disordered; another horse was provided, and the desperate ride resumed. But not before they had relieved him of all his valuables, leaving only his handkerchief and tablet. Even Lukowski shared in the plunder, snatching the ribbon of the King's black eagle, with the diamond cross attached to it.

Most of the conspirators now dispersed; no doubt in order to warn their chiefs of the captive's approach. Only seven remained, under the command of Kosinski. The night had grown so heavy that they had lost their bearings, and knew not where they were. Moreover, their horses were spent with fatigue, and would not budge a step further. The party were compelled to alight, and forced the King to do the same—though he had but one boot, the other having stuck in the mud of the city ditch.

For some time they continued to wander about the fields, unable to discover any regular road, or to get out of the neighbourhood of Warsaw. At length they remounted King Stanislaus, two of them holding him up in the saddle with their hands, while a third led the horse by the bridle. Thus they stumbled on, until the King, perceiving that they had struck into a path which led to a village called Burskow, warned them that some Russian soldiers were stationed there, who would probably attempt his rescue. Strange advice, you will say, for the King to have given to his abductors; but it was really dictated by consummate prudence. He was reasonably afraid that on seeing the Russian guard the conspirators might have killed him and taken to flight; whereas by informing them of the danger to which they were exposing themselves, he to some extent gained their confidence. And, as a matter of fact, thenceforward they treated him with greater lenity. Finding himself unable to endure any longer the painful

posture they had forced upon him, he begged them to provide him with a boot and another horse. To this they assented; and then resumed their journey over the pathless tracts, frequently retracing their course without knowing it, until they finally found themselves in the wood of Bielany, not more than a league from Warsaw.

Meanwhile the capital was a scene of consternation and perplexity. The guards were afraid that if they pressed the pursuit of the captors, the latter, in their rage, might put the King to death under cover of the darkness. On the other hand, by delaying, they gave them time to convey their victim to some secure retreat, whence it might not be possible to rescue him. At last, several nobles mounted their horses and followed up the traces of the conspirators until they reached the point where the King had crossed the ditch. There they picked up his pelisse, which the King had lost in the scuffle, and as it was blood-spotted and shot-torn, it confirmed them in their belief that the King was no more.

Stanislaus and his captors were still wandering in the wood of Bielany, when they were suddenly alarmed by the sounds of a Russian patrol. After holding a short conference together four of them disappeared, leaving Kosinski and two others with the King. A quarter of an hour later they came upon a second Russian guard, and the two men fled, so that the King was alone with Kosinski. Both had abandoned their horses and were on foot. Exhausted by all he had undergone, Stanislaus begged his guardian to halt and allow him a few minutes' repose. The Pole refused, and threatened him with his drawn sword, but at the same time told him they would find a vehicle waiting for them on the threshold of the wood. They continued their tramp until they found themselves at the gate of the Convent of Bielany. Kosinski was here so agitated by his thoughts that the King perceived his disorder, and having remarked that they had strayed from the road in quite a different direction, added: "I see that you do not know where to go. Let me seek shelter in the convent, and do you provide for your own safety." "No," replied Kosinski, "I have sworn."

They continued their journeyings until they arrived at Mariemont, a small palace belonging to the House of Saxony, which

is not more than half a league from Warsaw. Kosinaki showed some satisfaction on finding out where he was; and the King having again asked for a few minutes' rest, he consented. While they reclined together on the ground, the King employed the brief interval in endeavouring to propitiate his conductor, and persuade him to assist, or at least permit, his escape. He represented to him the criminality of his conduct in undertaking to kill his Sovereign, and the invalidity of an oath taken for such a purpose. Kosinaki listened attentively, and at last showed some signs of remorse. "But if," he said, "consenting to save your life, I reconduct you to Warsaw, what will be the consequence? I shall be arrested and put to death."

This reflection plunged him anew into uncertainty and embarrassment. "I give you my word," said the King, "that no ill shall befall you; but if you doubt the fulfilment of my promise, escape while there is yet time. I can find my way towards some place of safety, and I will certainly point out to any who might wish to pursue you a route directly opposite to that taken by you." Kosinaki could no longer resist. Throwing himself at the King's feet he implored his forgiveness, and swore to protect him against every enemy, adding that he would trust wholly to his generosity. The King repeated his promise that no harm should come to him. Thinking it prudent not the less to gain some asylum without delay, and remembering that there was a miller's hard by, he immediately turned his steps in that direction. Kosinaki knocked at the door. There was no reply. Then he broke a window-pane, and demanded that shelter should be given to a gentleman who had been ill-used by thieves; but the miller, thinking they were robbers, refused to open, and for more than half an hour persisted in the refusal. Eventually the King approached, and speaking through the broken casement, endeavoured to induce the miller to receive them. "If we were thieves," said he, "we could as easily have broken the whole window as a single pane." This pithy argument convinced the miller; he opened the door and received the King.

The latter immediately wrote in French the following note to General Couér, Colonel of his foot guards:

"By a kind of miracle I have escaped from my assassins, and am now at the little mill of Mariemont. Come as soon as may

be to convey me from here. I am wounded but not badly."

The King experienced some difficulty in finding a messenger to take the billet to Warsaw; but at length succeeded. Without a minute's delay Couér repaired to the mill, followed by a detachment of guards. On arriving there he found the King sound asleep on the ground, covered by the miller's cloak. The reader can imagine all that ensued—the surprise of the miller and his family when they discovered whom they had treated with such scant courtesy; the delight of the King at the happy ending of his night of peril; the rejoicings in Warsaw when the citizens welcomed back their sovereign. All's well that ends well, and so ended this strange story of the Abduction of a King.

THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "*Aunt Hepsey's Foundling*," "*My Land of Deulah*," "*Bonnie Kate*," "*The Peyton Romance*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX. WAITING FOR THE KNELL.

"AND now—you will not hold me back?"

Hubert Claverdon knew to what he had pledged himself when he promised blindfold. He looked fixedly at Alison as she stood before him, and the thought came over him—could he ever hold her back, when the impulse of an intense nature led her into this or that action? Another thought followed. Would he ever, however long Heaven granted them to walk through life together, wish to hold her back? Surely her impulse would always be high and holy—her deeds great and good.

He knew now to what he had pledged himself. A farewell interview with the condemned man before removal to Kilmainham, had shown Claverdon that his stock of strength was still small, his powers of endurance poor. Dr. Musters had said that it would be months before "Richard was himself again," and that care and rest, and a change to his native air, were things imperative.

After the manner of ailing men, Hubert had rebelled against these drastic opinions; but Alison would have her way. She held up a warning, imperious finger.

"If I be dear to some one else," she quoted; and after that there was nothing

more to be said. So it was settled they were all to go down to Forresterleigh, and Alison with them. There was, of course, no difficulty about a long furlough for Hubert; a privilege that Alison was proud to hear him speak of by its actual name, and not as going on leave.

The Colonel had thrown cold water upon the idea of the Rector buying his son out.

"If you do that," he said, "we cannot give him his commission, and that is what we wish to do. Our Quartermaster is about to retire upon his laurels, and then I shall recommend your son for the vacancy. After that—the world is wide, and he can do what he will. You can purchase him an exchange into some other corps if he wishes to stick to the service."

Well, in any case Hubert's promise must be kept. He must go to sunny Devon with his father and mother; but Alison must be left behind.

"It will be terrible for you—an awful ordeal, my darling—to be with that poor girl at such a time."

"It would be more terrible to me to be kept back. I cannot tell you how miserable I should be."

He saw that her words were indeed true: he realised that for the love of such a woman there was a price to pay.

"And you will go to Kilmainham—just you and she together?"

"Just she and I. We shall be together all the time—every hour, every moment, until all is over. Then I shall bring her back here to Father John. I will not let the old man go with us, because I think that it would kill him."

"And Norah is to see her lover?"

"Yes; once, and the two men, Coghlan and McMurdock; the Colonel has interceded for them."

Hubert Claverdon hid his face upon his arms.

"Oh, good Heaven!" he said, with a long-drawn breath like a sob, "it seems too high a price to pay for my poor faulty life. I would give all I have—except you—to save him."

Alison was afraid. When Mr. Milman told him, ever so gently, and with all delicate tact, that the sentence upon Deacon was death, Hubert had had a trying relapse. She dared not speak, but just laid her hand upon the dear, dark head; and in her touch was comfort and healing.

We are nearing the end of our story,

and to some the end may seem too sad; yet not altogether sad, I think, since we leave Alison fulfilling the highest and holiest task life can give to any one—the comforting and sustaining of the afflicted.

It is a shabby, sordid little room in which the two women wait for the tolling of the knell that shall tell of Harry Deacon's death. There is a poor little deal table in the middle of the room—a pitiful affair enough; and yet just now no altar gorgeously draped, and ablaze with lights, could be a more sacred thing. By this table the two women kneel, hand clasped in hand, with no barrier either of caste or creed between them. Everything is very silent. A bird sings sweetly in a cage somewhere across the paved yard into which the room looks. Alas for the poor colleen! The once lustrous eyes are dull and fixed—filled with an unspeakable fear. The prayer dies upon the lips, that are livid and drawn tightly over the white teeth. She clings to Alison as the drowning man to the rope.

Oh, the horror of it—the horror of it! Her darling boy—her Harry—now this moment alive, and strong in the strength of his young manhood; perhaps the next—swinging, a dead and lifeless thing, in a horrible pit.

The bird in the room across the yard sings jubilant, for a ray of sunlight has touched the gilded bars of his cage. Louder and louder, more joyous and more shrill, rises his cry, until, in one final outburst, it seems to rise into the very heart of ecstasy.

"It is the song of a pardoned soul," says Alison, speaking she knows not by what divine grace, and in that moment the knell sounds, with a horrible lingering between each note that shudders as it falls. A gleam like the flicker of madness lights up Norah's eyes, and she lifts her arms high towards heaven.

"They have killed him—killed him—killed him!" she shrieks, and her voice rises shrilly and more shrill.

Then, as the dull thud of the deep-voiced bell still beats the air, Alison catches her in her arms, and the two women, with smothered sobs, clasp each other close.

Do you say we end our story with a death-knell? Nay, for the echo of joy-bells is in the air; and in this strange and complex life of ours, do not the death-

knells and the joy-bells mingle—do not joy and sorrow, life and death, jostle one another?

L'ENVOI.

Years have passed, and brought many changes to the Hundred and Ninety-Third.

We will begin with Ensign Green. That gentleman's career in the service was cut short by a relative dying and leaving him a large estate and fortune. The duties of a landlord called him, and there was no other way than to obey. The night he dined with the mess as a guest—pathetic in a muffled suit of dress clothes—the farewell speech he made—bursting into bitter tears in the middle of it—these are written in the records of the regiment. Subsequently he presented a massive gold snuff-box to the mess, and it went by the name of "Green's snuff-box," a fact which is alluded to in another story, that tells of the doings of the Hundred and Ninety-Third.

Mention is also there made of his regiment of My name is Norval having left a reputation behind it. We do not gather that Mr. Blizzard's Dying Gladiator created a similar sensation. Blizzard was indeed a feeble creature, or looked upon as such; yet it is sometimes the feeble things of this life that confound the wise. Blizzard volunteered for active service in one of those miserable petty wars that often cost us, as a country, such valuable lives; he rescued a wounded man under fire, and just as he had laid his burden down in a place of safety, got shot through the body by a spent bullet. They carried Blizzard into the poor apology for a hospital where the wounded were cared for, and the surgeon in charge shook his head.

The injured man asked if the one he had rescued would live, and they said "Yes," and an orderly near added that the said man had a wife and kids at home; at which Blizzard turned his face to the canvas wall with a smile. Then, in the middle of the night, the sick started and turned in their beds; for a shrill voice rose in the silence. In his delirium the dying man was back in the old life—the life of *Soldiers' Evenings*, of song and step-dance, and this is what he sang:

There's one thing I can do,
Says I!
Get shot instead of you,
Says I!

"An' he done it, too," said an old soldier grimly. That was Blizzard's last

song and last word. So he wasn't such a very feeble creature, after all. When they heard his story the mess of the Hundred and Ninety-Third drank to his memory, all standing, and in silence—a fitting tribute.

And the doctor? Much the same; his hair growing more sparsely on the temples, thinner on the crown; but quite as full of energy as ever, and as busy organising *Soldiers' Evenings*. Dr. Musters is, however, a Surgeon-Major now, and his Amelia delights in being the wife of a field-officer. She also greatly prides herself upon the possession of a certain bracelet, which on festive occasions adorns her well-made, plump little arm. It has two hearts in diamonds on the clasp, and—rather reversing the order of things, perhaps, yet full of a charming significance—was given to her by Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Claverdon on their wedding-day. Perhaps presents of this kind were the fashion in the Hundred and Ninety-Third, for on the day that Eliza married Drummer Coghlan, a neat square box arrived at Major Henneker's, and from a round aperture in the front thereof looked forth a little frilled face, and Missy, screaming with delight, pulled forth poor Abednego and "apreaded" him on the spot, while every one gazed in admiration at a small silver collar round his neck, whereon was engraved the magic name: "Little Missy." But Missy could not forget good Eliza, and many a night the child cried herself to sleep, in spite of the fact that the square box stood on a chair by her bedside. Eliza, too, fretted for her nursing until she got a Little Missy of her own; and even then the conceit was somewhat taken out of her, for Missy, after regarding the infant intently, with her head on one side and her eyes gravely reflective, said, with solemn earnestness:

"Do you really think it is so much nicer than little Abednego? It 'pears to me a little tiresome that its little face should be so red, and the top of its head like Dr. Musters's."

At the time I am writing up to there was no Little Missy any more. There was a rather lanky girl, with two long plaits of golden hair hanging down her back, busy with her lesson-books, but not the Little Missy we have known. As time goes on she will be lanky no more; she will blossom into rare and peerless beauty; and maybe I shall one day tell the story of her joys and sorrows,

loves and pains. About three years after the sad death of Private Deacon, Major Henneker sold out and turned his sword into a plough-share, gliding with all the ease of a perfect man of the world into the position of a country gentleman. Verrinder had exchanged with one the Honourable Robert Dacre, gone to India and taken Elsie with him. Truly, as we go on in life, "the old order changeth, yielding place to new."

For our closing scene we find ourselves once more in Ireland; once more in the soft, sweet early summer, when the meadows are starred with blossoms, and the music of the woods is at its sweetest. We are at Kinsale, and the glint of the bright bay is seen through the trees, the trees that are the homes of countless cushats. How fair the clear expanse of water, kissing the pale faces of the forget-me-nots that grow right down to its edge! In other parts of the shore the rocks run sheer down into the bay, and in their steep sides are caverns where the sea-flowers, of many a tint and hue, open their delicate corollas in the bright water, gently moving their slender petals, as though they were asleep and dreaming. The road winds round the bay, and here is the turn where the mackerel boats come in of a morning, and the exquisitely tinted fish leap and struggle in the nets, until they look like imprisoned sunshine.

Winding with the road, and passing the square-towered church, we come to a plain, massive building, with high, narrow windows and great gates.

It is the Convent of our Lady of Mercy; and, in the parlour, where the Mother Superior and the nuns receive their rare visitors, a group is assembled, in which we cannot but take some interest. There is a tall, dark, soldierly-looking man, and a most winsome lady by his side. We cannot mistake Alison, though happiness has chased much of the pensiveness from her fair face, and she is more matronly in figure than of yore. Between these two, and by the mother's knee, stands a bonnie little fellow of three summers, dark-eyed like the father, but with all Alison's sweetness in his radiant smile.

On her knees before the child is a nun, one who goes by the name of Sister Norah. It is our own colleen—colleen no longer—her face chiselled and spiritualised by a life of discipline and self-forgetfulness, and yet with the old sadness in the dark grey eyes; the sadness that nature had somehow planted there to tell of a sorrowful life to come. The boy studied the beautiful face in the quaint and unfamiliar setting of the conventual veil, the face that looked at him so tenderly and with such wishful fondness.

"Kiss the lady, darling," said Alison, and the chubby baby mouth made itself into a rosebud, and touched the pale mouth of the nun. "Tell her your name, sweet," went on the mother. It was a great effort to speak plain enough, but the three-year-old tongue did its best.

"Har-ry Cla-ver-don—daddy's de-ar little boy—an' mummie's too," he added, slipping his precious little hand into Alison's; then, with the quick sympathy of a child, he said: "Oh, mummie, de-ar, the pretty lady is crying!" and the two little loving arms went round Norah's neck, and she held him close and fast, hiding her face against him, and saying softly, "Harry, Harry," so that at last he got half afraid, and Alison had to soothe and quiet him.

But do not think that Norah's life is all sadness. There is nothing morbid about her. She is young, and of a healthy frame; she may live to be as old as the Mother Superior, whose gentle face is all over tiny lines and wrinkles, and her hands like withered brown leaves.

"Sister Norah loves to be among the little ones in our schools—she is the best teacher we have," says this Lady Abbess, as Hubert Claverdon and his wife are taking their leave, "and she wins all their hearts entirely."

She has evidently won little Harry's heart, for he strains back from his mother's hand to look at the sweet-faced nun, and finally wafes a kiss to her from the tips of his chubby fingers.

Life for Norah may be long; but she has work enough to do, and she is happy.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

AN ARISTOCRATIC PROGRAMME.

HALF an hour after this, Philip Gillbanks followed the strange Prince through the cold, gloomy hall, then down a long stone passage. He was making a mental picture of the Princess, meaning to paint it for the amusement of his sister Clytie and of his friend Forster. Clytie was a born Republican. She despised all the aristocracy in a body, and was so advanced in her views, that she desired to pull down every existing institution of Church and State. She and Forster, coming from opposite poles of society, had apparently met at the same point; but where mere opinions are the point of interest, appearances are very deceptive.

Philip had by this time decided that he was in a house where all its members were severally and collectively afflicted with delusions, but that, as he was a stranger taken in on sufferance and kindly allowed food and shelter, he must of course respect their idiosyncrasies. Feeling weary, his greatest wish at this moment was to be allowed to retire to bed; but he was so thankful for the hospitality he had received at the hands of Royalty that he could not behave as if he were at a common inn.

The Prince paused at the end of the passage as if he wished to make a remark; however, either from shyness or from inability to frame his thoughts he said nothing, but slowly opened the door.

Philip's frame of mind was by this time decidedly cheerful. He was expecting to see a Princess who should in manners and appearance match the Prince. The first thing he noticed, when he stepped over this new threshold, was that he was in a large, old-fashioned room, oak-panelled, and with deep recesses to the great bay windows. There was here a look of far greater comfort and refinement than he had seen elsewhere in the house, and the stately simplicity of the furniture at once impressed him as being of very ancient date. A lamp was standing on the table, placed on a slightly raised platform running all along the western end of the room. The effect was very quaint and picturesque, and afterwards Philip found out that the reason of the raised floor was that a small western chamber had at some time been added to the drawing-room, and that the higher floor level had been left untouched.

Suddenly it seemed to the young man that he was being ushered into the presence of Royalty, or at least of some being quite above him in social rank. Having in a few seconds become accustomed to the dim light, he was struck speechless by the vision of the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. She was dressed in black, but an old-fashioned white embroidered fichu was thrown over her shoulders and crossed at her waist. Her hair was coiled round the top of her head, leaving the slender throat well defined.

The so-called Duke was sitting beside her, and his picturesque attire greatly added to the mystification. Philip was so utterly unprepared for this strange revelation of beauty, that he was seized with a feeling that the whole episode was a dream, and that, having fallen asleep on the fell, he had been led, like some

bewitched knight of folk-lore, to this strange court in order to be lured to his destruction.

The Princess was at this moment bending over an embroidery frame, and Philip noticed her small white hands, one above and one below, swiftly taking and retaking the needle.

As the door shut, the Princess paused and looked down the long room, trying to pierce the gloom which enveloped the opposite side. Then Philip saw her distinctly, and noted also—indeed, it was impossible not to note—the look of haughty pride which marred the expression of the otherwise perfect features. The handsome man sitting beside her might have been her father, so striking was the likeness between them, but her innate look of distinction was even more noticeable than his.

Philip's feeling of scornful merriment immediately disappeared as he followed the awkward Prince up to the door.

"Penelope, here is the stranger," he said gruffly.

The Princess rose slowly; she did not even hold out the tips of her fingers, but made a very distant bow, which her exalted position appeared to render even more distant. She motioned him to a chair below the door, whilst the Duke, who had at once risen and stepped down to meet Philip, sat down on another close beside him.

"I must apologise," began Philip, feeling so utterly abashed and surprised that he was conscious of appearing as awkward as the Prince himself.

The Princess waved her hand a little impatiently as she answered:

"Jim Oldeorn could not have done otherwise than to bring you here. You are a stranger, or you would not have missed your path."

"It was extremely foolish of me," said Philip, suppressing the desire to say, "Your Royal Highness."

"Not at all," said the Duke, with the most courtly bow, whilst the tone, polite as it was, seemed to poor Philip to affirm rather than to deny his remark. The Princess said nothing, but continued her work in silence.

"Oblige me, David, by closing the door," continued the Duke. "If the ghost finds it open she may wish to enter." The smile on his lips as he said this was full of subtle irony, and, accompanied as it was by his courtly gestures, it struck Philip as strangely fascinating. At the

same moment, looking furtively up at the Princess, he noticed the smile repeated on her face.

"The Duke concludes that you belong to the new régime," she said, turning very slightly towards Philip, "and that you have no fears of ghosts."

Again Philip was almost struck dumb by the strange difference he had found in this strange household where the son could hardly express his thoughts at all, where the father could not speak without strong language, and where the uncle and niece expressed themselves in perfect English.

For a moment he again imagined the whole was a delusion, and that he was witnessing a ghostly repetition of a long-past scene.

He grasped the arm of his chair; it certainly felt like good, solid English oak, and was no mere shadow.

"Of course you have a family ghost. I have often wished to see one. Is yours ever visible?"

"It is seen here at times," continued the Princess quietly, in her clear, silvery voice, "but only very occasionally. Still, my ancestress is often heard. If she takes a liking to any one she will follow them down the passage, but to see her is a sign of misfortune."

The Prince, who was standing awkwardly on one leg, burst out laughing.

"I've never seen her."

"I am not surprised," was his sister's answer, and Philip detected the tone of scorn in the young lady's voice; "but she was seen when you were born."

The Duke smiled and took a pinch of snuff, an act which Philip thought added to the old-world feeling, but he also noticed how well the action showed off the shape of the well-formed hand.

"Your sister repeats hearsay, as you are her elder."

"Then I think the hearsay is from your mouth," she said, "and I know that is good authority."

"You must excuse any little warmth of feeling we may show about our family ghost," continued the Duke, looking at Philip. "I believe there are but few left in the country. Have you studied the subject of apparitions?"

"No, I don't interest myself much about ghosts, but my friend—Forster Bethune——"

"I beg your pardon, I did not catch your friend's name."

"Bethune, Forster Bethune; he is the greatest friend I have, and he is deeply interested in spirits and apparitions. He collects them."

"Indeed!" Again came the delicate tone of irony, which made Philip wince.

"Not the spirits themselves, of course, but stories of them. He means to write a book with quite a new explanation of apparitions. I forget what it is, but Bethune has new explanations for everything."

"He must be refreshing in this age of old ideas," said the Princess.

"The world is never good enough for you, Penzie," said her brother suddenly; indeed, whenever he made a remark, by some trick of wild nature his words appeared to be shot forth as peas from a pea-shooter.

"Apparently it is good enough for your needs, so it must have reached a high state of perfection," was the answer.

"Hang it," muttered the Prince, "I'm off. Father wants to load that timber this evening, and I had better help him."

"To-night?" said the Duke, glancing at the curtainless window, which offered a desolate prospect of foggy rain.

"The men take twice as long as is necessary."

"I suppose some light is necessary even to load timber," said the Princess.

The Prince laughed. Whenever he did not see the drift of his sister's remarks—and this was frequently the case, because, to use his expression, she was "so deuced clever"—he hid his ignorance with laughter.

He now walked hurriedly towards the door, and slammed it after him. He was seen no more that evening. Philip was too wise to question Royalty, but he could not reconcile the fact of the King and his heir calmly walking out into the dripping rain on business, and the Princess and the Duke—belonging apparently to another race of thinking beings—sitting in a quaint room, speaking in the polished tones of highly-bred English people.

"If I be I," he thought, "this is all past my unravelling. I wish Forster were here; even Clytie might help me out," but, having no friendly help at hand to unravel the mystery, Philip's eyes could only fix themselves on the beautiful woman before him, wondering what it all meant, and more and more fascinated by the turn of her head and every movement of her beautifully-formed hands. He had been weary before

entering the room, now he was glad to sit here, even on sufferance, so that he might watch her. He addressed most of his remarks to the Duke, but he secretly cared only as to what might be their effect on this Princess. This name now appeared to him quite natural; half an hour ago it had sounded ridiculous. He was willing to conclude that the idea of Royalty had originated with her, and that the other titles had followed as a joke, though, indeed, as far as the Duke was concerned, he might be said not unworthily to invade the aristocratic circle. He was, perhaps, a little too clever and too sarcastic for the ordinary run of Dukes, that is, of the Dukes of whom Forster spoke, for Philip himself was not acquainted with the race, and the one heir to a dukedom whom he had known at Oxford had not given him any high ideas of that select circle. But this Duke of Greybarrow would have "adorned" any society, if, indeed, it had not shunned him for his subtle sarcasms, of which Philip was conscious without having any specific thing to complain of as to the remarks which fell from his lips.

When the Prince had shut the door there was a noticeable pause. The Princess frowned slightly, and her hands moved more swiftly above and below the frame; then gradually the disturbing thoughts, whatever they might be, appeared to be laid to rest. Suddenly she secured her needle, and looked at her uncle. Philip did not lose any of her expressions, and he noticed at once that the beautiful face unconsciously assumed a look of tenderness, which was certainly not habitual to it.

Philip thought: "If she is proud she can love. She loves her uncle, but how quaintly she addresses him."

"Has the King sold all that wood, sir?" she asked.

"I believe so, Penzie."

"Will he replant the hillside?"

"That is extremely doubtful."

The Princess tapped her foot impatiently.

"It is Jim Oldcorn's fault; he loves to haggle over a bargain."

"He merely follows suit," said the Duke, taking another pinch of snuff, "and you must give him his due, Penzie, for the fellow never revokes."

Then the Princess evidently bethought herself that the conversation was not one a stranger should listen to. She turned towards Philip, apparently looking at him attentively for the first time since his entrance, and Philip felt that he coloured

slightly. What an idiot he was ; but, on the other hand, why was she so beautiful ? It was ridiculous and out of place to find such a being in such strange surroundings. Clytie, who considered herself clever, and indeed was so, could not stand comparison with this north-country maiden.

Again he said to himself : "Am I dreaming ?" But the Princess was speaking to him.

"I think you said your name was——"

Philip had not spoken on this insignificant subject, but he hastened to supply the omission, remembering at the same time that he did not know how to address the Princess, except by that strange and—well, yes, ridiculous title. Of course she could not be a real Princess, for Blood Royal cannot hide itself in any outlandish corner of the British Isles.

"I was only wondering the other day, Mr. Gillbanks, whether the modern spirit of unbelief in spirits or the modern power of believing in anything and everything were the strongest. Living here almost outside the world, one has to think out a few problems."

"My friend Bethune is full of ideas and speculations. I often contradict him for the sake of hearing him fulminate against the opposition."

"Your friend is interested, I suppose, in many things?" she asked, with the half-hidden longing of some one who wishes to go forth and do battle, but has to be content merely with tales of war.

"Oh, he is quite different to other men. Though aristocratic by birth, he thinks——" Philip stopped short, for he was going to say, "that all titles should be abolished."

"Thinks what?" said the Princess.

"That the world needs much reformation," stammered Philip, whilst the Duke remarked :

"Is your friend a Bethune of Bethune Castle?"

"Yes; his father is still alive, but I should not be surprised if my friend settles to cut off the entail and sell the place, for I fancy he will never marry."

"If the male entail were abolished," said the Princess quietly, "properties could go on in the female line."

"And sometimes it would be greatly to the advantage of old families," said the Duke thoughtfully.

"I should think so indeed," said the Princess, lightly tapping her foot. "What we need in England are great families who

will understand what is due to themselves and to their country, who could all stand together to uphold their rights, and to crush the arrogance of the middle class."

"The arrogance of——" murmured Philip.

"Yes, of the middle class. It is they who have brought England to her low condition. They who imagine that money can do everything without birth. If we old families could rally round each other, then there would yet be hope for us. I believe that even now if one man or one woman from our best nobility would make a stand against all vulgar ideas, I believe that even now England would rise again."

The girl's eyes were kindled. Self-generated and mysterious energy which no man can explain, and which each one calls by a different name, had called forth her enthusiasm.

The Duke's lips, on the contrary, kept their peculiar, quiet smile, but Philip saw plainly that he glanced admiringly at his niece.

"You said just now, Penzie, that you believed that one woman could do it. I venture to say that I know that woman. Tell us how she would set about it."

The Princess rose slowly, apparently quite unconscious of the wonderful beauty she possessed, and also quite unconscious of the far-away look in her dark eyes and of the bright colour that suddenly flushed her oval face. She stood against the dark woodwork and clasped her hands, but there was not the least theatrical appearance about her; it needs but small insight to recognise nature from art.

"How would she do it? Oh! I know, I can see it all—only—she must be rich. She must be able to cope with the vulgar world on its own footing. She must have money, and use it as it should be used. She must come among her own circle as one of themselves, a true aristocrat, and there she must show them what they have lost and what they could regain by keeping true to themselves."

The Princess paused.

"Yes," said the Duke, "it would be a fine mission." Philip, keen watcher as he was, could not tell whether the man were really appreciative of his niece's words or merely covering them with his veneer of scorn. "But, my dear Penzie, the question is, would she succeed?"

"Yes," continued the Princess, "if she could come amongst them rich enough to

despise them, and rich enough to accept no favours from any of them, then they would listen to her, and they would see the sense of all she told them. She would show them how sordid are all their motives when they patronise the rich merely because they are rich ; how small their aims ; how worthless their ambitions."

"In fact, she would change them altogether," put in the Duke. Then, as if politeness obliged him to address Philip, he continued : "What is your opinion, Mr. Gillbanks ?"

The Princess seemed suddenly to recollect the presence of the stranger. She sat down again at her frame and slowly took up her needle, as if Philip's opinion were of no consequence to her. He at once felt the change, and he knew that his ideas were nothing to her.

"I should like you to hear my friend Bethune talk on these matters. He has great ideas of reforming the world, but he would set about it in rather a different manner. I dare say, though, if you were to discuss the subject with him, it would end in your paths leading much to the same end."

A slight but exquisite curl of the girl's upper lip made Philip recognise that he was speaking to a woman who would certainly not change her path.

"Your friend may be clever, but, as for myself, I can see but one way. Leadership must come from the superior class. It is with the educated classes and with the true aristocracy alone that reform is of any value. You know the common people copy us ; they are proud to imitate our ways and our doings. It is utterly foolish to talk of wisdom resting with the people. If it does, why do we strive to educate them ? No, wisdom must flow from the higher channel."

"The woman I am thinking of," said the Duke, "has seen very little of the world ; she has read much and thought much ; but do you not think, Penelope, that if she were launched upon that whirlpool which we call society, she would be simply wrecked in the maelstrom ?"

"Some women might be. Oh, yes, some might be, but the nobly born have more staying power—much more—than the people. Put a girl whose family is 'nouveau riche' in that position, and of course she will be swept away by the excitement ; but the other——"

The Duke gave a slight shrug of the shoulders and smiled again.

"The other you think, Princess, would weather the storm !"

"Yes, yes !" She spoke in a low, clear voice, and Philip was astonished at the strong feeling these two words revealed.

"You are over confident," said her uncle.

"I thought you, too, believed as I do, that it is breeding which conquers in the long run—in the long run, uncle. I thought you at least were true to our old motto : 'Absolutus sum ignavis.'"

"Certainly, with the old rapier, the sword, or the bow ; but modern warfare has discarded all antiquated arms, Penzle. Besides——" The Duke paused then, and said, in quite another tone : "You must be anxious to retire to rest, Mr. Gillbanks. If you will excuse me a minute I will see if all is ready for you."

Philip began to protest, but the Duke, smiling, deprecated his objections and went out of the room. For a few moments there was silence in the chamber, except from the soft click of the needle passing through the stiff material. Philip was longing for Forster's presence, and a whole train of ideas filled his mind. The one which chiefly predominated was :

"Who is she ? What does it all mean ? If these are deluded people, the world would be the better if it were full of them."

"You are on the threshold of the life we have been discussing, I suppose," said the Princess slowly.

She did not speak as if Philip's career were of any interest to her, but as if she, a weak woman, would willingly change places with him, a well-equipped man.

"Yes, I am on the threshold, but——" he wanted to explain that he belonged to the class which she wanted to wipe off the face of the earth, but he could not frame the words, and the Princess evinced no curiosity for information.

"I see you do not agree with me," she said.

"Well, perhaps not altogether, but——"

"I do not blame you ; I do not expect every one to agree with my uncle and myself. Only a few can do so, but our family, having lived here so long——"

"I see you are of course an old family," said Philip, smiling, "but I have not yet heard your family name."

He positively stammered over this remark, so much was he disconcerted before this beautiful girl, resembling no other woman he had ever met. Her glance of almost cold disdain and pride finished his discomfiture.

"We do not advertise ourselves as modern people like to do; for many miles round these glens and mountains there would be no need to do so. All the dalemen know the King of Rothery."

"Yes," faltered Philip, "I heard that title, but——"

"But what else is there to know?"

"Is it a—a name given in——?"

"Yes, of course, it was given hundreds of years ago. My ancestor was made King of Rothery. I wonder you have never heard that the brave David Winkell, hearing how the fierce border-men were coming to overrun our dales and our mountain fastnesses, rushed forth from this spot and rallied the frightened people. 'I ask only a handful of you to follow me,' he called out, 'then I, David Winkell, will lead you.' And they looked at his face full of belief in his cause and in his country, and they rallied round him, those at least who had stouter hearts than the rest, and David Winkell went out from this very glen, and all night he climbed the fells, and in the early morning when the mist lifted they found themselves face to face with the herd of wild border-men. Then David said: 'They are more in number, but our cause is the best; we fight for our rights and for our lands.' Then he stationed his men behind one of the hillocks, where you lost yourself, and he kept the narrow pass till the border-men were disheartened; then he rushed forth upon them and drove them back over the steep rocks, and their corpses strewed the deep valley beneath, and the eagles came to feed upon them. When evening came again they brought David back in triumph to this glen, and they crowned him King of Rothery. They said his family should always from that time have their rightful title, and that his home should be his people's Palace. Who could deny them, for David's land was allodial, and was held of no superior."

"And ever since then?" said Philip, now seeing that he was indeed in the presence of as true Royal blood as those who claim the title from the world.

"Ever since then—from time immemorial the dalemen like to say—the Winkells have been Kings of Rothery, from father to son, and if some have failed, there have always been others of the family ready to bear the burden of true greatness."

"I see that it is so," said Philip earnestly, no longer willing to laugh in ridicule, but

entirely conquered by the power of this one of David Winkell's descendants.

Penelope Winkell put away her work and again stood up.

"There are only about two reigning families who could show a pedigree like ours," she said in a tone that was the essence of pride; "but then the others have gold to prop up their poor birthright. We have become poor!"

"And the Gillbanks, who have risen from the lowest rank, are rich," thought Philip, with a feeling of shame, for his wealth seemed to insult the poverty of the Princess. But at this moment the Duke re-entered, and Philip had no longer any wish to smile at his title. Had not the Princess said that some of her family had always been able to bear their honours well? And the Duke most certainly was one of them.

"Your room is prepared for you," said the Duke.

Philip rose and wondered how he ought to bid his hostess good night; but there was no time for thought, the Duke was waiting.

"Good night, Penelope," said her uncle, taking his niece's hand, and bending over it he kissed it in courtly fashion. Philip knew the Queen's hand was kissed by her subjects, so surely he could not err by following the Duke's example. The Princess seemed to take his homage and the low bow that he bestowed upon her quite as her right, and it was only when the Duke had left him at the door of his room that he recalled with new surprise the contrast between the King and the Princess. This time, however, he only smiled, he did not laugh.

As the Duke, having left the guest, was walking down the passage, he met the Princess going to her own room. Even to him she looked like some beautiful old-world apparition, for she was still dreaming of the possible future. The Duke was a great admirer of beauty, and besides this he loved Penelope as if she were his child, for he had done everything for his niece. To him she owed her education, her powers of concentrated thought, and some of her scornful speeches. He was proud of her, though he did not often express his true feelings. As for the Duke, he was a mystery to all about him, and sometimes to himself; but he had been a strange life.

"Well, Penzie, what made you so discursive to-night?" he said, still with his

touch of sarcasm, to which the Princess was too much accustomed to notice.

"It was, I suppose, seeing a glimpse of the outer world that made me speak. We see it so seldom," she said almost sadly.

"And you wish to see it?" There was a slight tone of anxiety discernible in his voice.

"Yes, I wish to see it."

"You shall, Princess. By the way, this young man is an ingenuous cub—he must, I think, be the son of the firm of Gillbanks and Son, known all over the world."

"Firm?"

The Princess was not interested.

"Patent boiler-screw makers! Enormously rich people."

"Oh! a 'nouveau riche'!"

All the scorn the Princess could put into her voice was concentrated in the two words, as she went on to her own room.

A CHAPTER IN NAVAL HISTORY.

NAVAL history is not contained only in the biographies of those whom we have elevated to the Temple of Heroes. We are, as a nation, predisposed to hero-worship, but the opportunities for the sudden making of splendid names are few and far between, while history goes on continually. As Shakespeare says:

There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased.

We are apt to ignore this, when turning all our gaze and admiration upon the departed great ones, who are smiling serene even in the Shades, because, as Dante says: "On earth their names in Fame's eternal volume shine for aye."

Thus it is that the mute inglorious Miltons and the village Hampdens of the poet's dream are regarded as nebulous impossibilities. How could a Milton be either "mute" or "inglorious"? How could a Hampden remain shut up in a village all his life? It has been said by some one that the voice of Fame is alone the voice of Truth, and this is practically the verdict of the world; but it may be unjust, for all that. Certain it is, at any rate, that even as many men grow so blind in gazing at the sun that they cannot see the beauty of the stars, so we are all too ready to concentrate our gaze on the pet heroes of history, and to miss the smaller lights who helped to make them heroes.

Yet without these smaller lights our world would be dark indeed.

To read the annals of our national glory only by the suspended greater lights is as wrong as Professor Seeley has shown it would be to read the History of England as a mere succession of dynasties. Let us not forget that in the manufacturing of Heroes the world has made many mistakes. Some of these mistakes may have been of omission, as well as of commission.

As a maritime nation we naturally take most pride and delight in our Naval Heroes. And what a cluster of them do we not owe to Bonaparte! The close of the eighteenth, and the opening years of the nineteenth, century were indeed the palmy days for "the sudden making of splendid names." The long years of "the old war" gave us a large selection of gallant men, whose deeds are deathless, and whose memories will be ever green. But they gave us also a larger number whose memories are withered, yet whose works follow them.

Let us take a brief glance at the career of one of these men, who helped to make our glory and to build up our history, but whom a partial hero-worship has permitted us to forget.

Few people now, perhaps, are familiar with the name of Admiral John Markham. Yet he was twice one of the Lords of the Admiralty in the early years of the present century, and for over twenty years he represented the naval borough of Portsmouth in Parliament.

John Markham came of a good stock. His family had been resident in Nottinghamshire for several centuries, and produced a Bishop, two Judges, many Knights of the Shire, several eminent soldiers, and one traitor. This traitor was the "bar sinister" on the family shield, and with him began the decay of the family prosperity. The ruin was completed by one Sir Robert Markham, in the days of James the First, described as "a fatal unthrift," and "destroyer of this eminent family." The grandson of this "fatal unthrift" descended so low as to become a common London 'prentice-boy. But he seems to have had some of the original "grit" of the old family in him, for he volunteered for military service in Ireland, under the Duke of York, about 1680.

He married and settled in Ireland, and had a son William, whom he was able to educate at Trinity College, Dublin, and for whom he purchased a commission in the

army. William seems to have been rather harum-scarum in his youth, but by-and-by he married and settled at Kinsale on his half-pay of one hundred pounds a year. There, though proud of his ancient family, he augmented his income by keeping a school. After his wife's death he moved to London, in order to give his three sons the education and up-bringing of gentlemen. To gain the wherewithal he did copying and engrossing work for two solicitors, and he also painted fans, which, in disguise, he sold in the streets. Once more we see the strong heroic trait of the race. One of his younger sons he put into the army, one into the navy. On the eldest, William, he lavished most of his attention and reared all his hopes.

They were well bestowed, for William was the restorer of the family fortunes and fame. Entered as a scholar at Westminster in his fourteenth year, William early attracted attention, and in five years was the captain of the school, and elected a student of Christ Church, Oxford. Among his schoolfellows and companions were Thomas Sheridan, father of the famous Richard Brinsley; Graville Leveson Gower, future Marquis of Stafford; Edmond Burton, the scholar; and Howe and Keppel, the future Admirals. After a few years' residence at Oxford, William was appointed Head Master of Westminster School, in succession to his own old master.

It is gratifying to know that the gallant, self-denying old half-pay Captain lived to see his favourite son in that position of honour, and even to see him still higher. At this time the scholar's most intimate friends were William Murray, future Earl of Mansfield, and Edmund Burke. Among his pupils were Jeremy Bentham; Cyril Jackson, afterwards Dean of Christ Church; and Archibald MacDonald, afterwards Lord Chief Baron. William, now Doctor, Markham married the daughter of a wealthy merchant, and was appointed successively Dean of Rochester, Dean of Christ Church, Chaplain to George the Second, Bishop of Carlisle, Tutor to the young Princes, and Archbishop of York.

He had thirteen children—six boys and seven girls—all of whom did well in the world, but with only one of whom we are concerned at present.

John was the second son and was born in 1761, at the Head Master's house in Little Dean's Yard, Westminster. When only eight years old he was sent to Westminster School, of which Dr. Samuel

Smith was then head, and Dr. Vincent was one of the teachers. It was from the latter—the author of "The History of the Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients in the Indian Ocean"—that Jack derived his ideas of naval glory. Among his schoolfellows were many lads who afterwards became famous—Home Popham, the Admiral and Marine Surveyor; Everard Home, the great physician; Charles Abbot, Speaker of the House of Commons, and afterwards created Lord Colchester; Henry Agar, Lord Clifden; George, afterwards Lord, Barrington; James Affleck, who died a Baronet and a General; Robert Hobart, fourth Earl of Buckinghamshire, and Governor of Madras; Spencer Madan; George Rice, afterwards Lord Dynevor, and his own brother-in-law; and a number of others more or less known to fame. With such companions, and in listening to the learned and brilliant company which used to gather in his father's house, the days of John Markham's boyhood were happily enough passed.

On the eleventh of March, 1775, little Jack Markham, now of the mature age of thirteen years and nine months, was entered as an officer in His Majesty's Navy. He joined the "Romney," then fitting out at Deptford, under the command of Captain the Honourable George Elphinstone, afterwards Admiral Lord Keith. Jack was always fortunate in his companions; his favourite messmate in the "Romney" was "the gallant good Riou," immortalised in Campbell's ballad. Their friendship endured until Riou's glorious death at Copenhagen.

Jack's first voyage was to Newfoundland, where the "Romney" remained cruising for two months, and then returned to Spithead with a convoy. While she was in port he was allowed a short holiday, part of which he spent with the young Princes at Buckingham Palace, then called the "Queen's House." The Prince of Wales, writing to Dr. Markham, said of this visit: "Dear Admiral went last Thursday. We may say to him what Virgil makes Apollo say to Ascanius:

"Macte novâ virtute puer:
Sic itur ad astra.

(Advance, illustrious youth! increase in fame,
And wide from east to west extend thy name.)"

Captain Elphinstone was transferred to the "Perseus" in 1776, and Jack went with him. The "Perseus" was sent out to New York with a convoy of eighteen merchantmen, the seas then swarming with American privateers. The great War of

Independence was now going on. Convoying a fleet of merchantmen across the Atlantic was then an exciting and an anxious task, and the "Perseus" had her share of the fun. First a rebel sloop-of-war was captured, and then a schooner was taken. To his pride and delight Jack was sent, with a crew of four men, to take charge of this last prize, and he brought her safely into New York harbour. There he fell in with his uncle, Enoch Markham, Colonel of the Forty-Sixth Regiment, who saw some hard service during the rebellion.

It provokes a natural smile nowadays to read of a child of fourteen commanding a prize of war, but our smile disappears very soon. After a year's cruising and chasing of privateers on the American coast, the "Perseus" joined a small squadron which was engaged in hunting pirates, and which in February, 1777, proceeded to the West Indies. There, off the Island of St. Eustatia, the "Perseus" overhauled and captured a privateer sloop carrying ten guns, eight swivels, and a crew of twenty-eight men. Jack was again put in charge, and shortly after parting company with the frigate, was chased by an enemy's cruiser. He crowded on all sail and triumphantly brought his charge into the English harbour at Antigua. There he heard that his father had been created Archbishop of York, and he was naturally elated with joyful pride.

Captain Elphinstone now changed into the "Pearl," one of the finest frigates in the navy, and was employed in surveys at the mouth of the Delaware—Jack still with him. In a few months they both returned to the "Perseus," which vessel went to cruise off the coast of the Carolinas. There, during very dirty weather, a large merchant vessel was sighted, chased, and captured. All the crew, saving four American-Frenchmen, who were left to help in working her, were taken off, and Jack was clapped on board with four men and a boy from the "Perseus." A gale was gathering, and there was just time to tell him to make the best of his way to an English port. He was now barely sixteen. The gale came on with violence, the prize sprang a leak, and became waterlogged. His English crew, thinking all was up, became insubordinate, seized upon a cask of spirits, and drank themselves into a state of insensibility.

Jack was at the helm, and the boy was

asleep. This was too good an opportunity for the Frenchmen to lose, and they determined to regain the ship. One took a musket, another a cutlass, the others got handspikes, and together they rushed on Jack. They had mistaken their man—or boy. Jack, if young, was active. He jumped quickly aside, seized an iron pump-handle, felled the man with the musket, disabled the man with the cutlass, and drove the other two under hatches, which he smartly battened down. The boy, awakened by the noise, came to his help, and the two wounded men on deck were secured. Thus he remained in command of a sinking vessel, four prisoners, a drunken crew, and one boy. When the men came to their senses a thorough examination was made of the vessel, which they found to be full of stores and tobacco, and that she could not sink. They all had a hard time of it, before a passing vessel rescued them, and so many months elapsed before Jack landed in England, that his friends had put on mourning, believing him to be dead. It was a happy reunion, and the plucky young midshipman had again a well-deserved holiday. We cease to smile now at the boy-commander.

Jack's next cruise was in the "Roebuck," under the command of Sir Andrew Hamond—a gallant captain, knighted for his services during this war. Jack was now promoted to be Acting Lieutenant.

After a nine weeks' passage to New York, the "Roebuck" joined the fleet of Admiral Arbuthnot on an expedition to South Carolina. The object was to attack the strongly-fortified city of Charleston, and a number of troops were landed at the mouth of the Elisha River, with a naval brigade under Jack's old captain, Elphinstone. The "Roebuck"—on board which Admiral Arbuthnot now hoisted his flag—accompanied by the "Renown" and the "Romulus," lightened of guns, water, and provisions, crossed the bar to attack nine war-vessels which the enemy had inside. These were withdrawn up the river to Charleston, and there sunk to block the passage. But the "Roebuck" pushed on, passed Fort Moultrie under a heavy fire, and landed men to attack the fort, which then surrendered. Charleston surrendered a few days later, and very soon afterwards the whole of South Carolina was taken by Lord Cornwallis's army.

Markham did such good service in this

affair that he was promoted to be First Lieutenant of the "Roebuck," and he shared in the thanks voted by both Houses of Parliament to the officers and men engaged. Returning to New York, the "Roebuck" cruised for a time off Rhode Island, and early in 1781 returned to England.

But Markham was then in charge of the rebel prize-frigate, and after disposing of her he joined the "Royal Oak," and went on a cruise to Nova Scotia. There he was selected for duty on board of the "London," the flag-ship of Admiral Graves. Meanwhile the French had joined the rebels in an attempt to root out Lord Cornwallis from South Carolina, and news arrived that the French Admiral, De Grasse, with twenty-four sail of the line, was making for Chesapeake Bay. Thither the combined fleets of Hood and Graves—in all nineteen sail—followed, and sighted the enemy on the fifth of September, 1781.

The French fleet weighed, battle was at once opened, and a good deal of damage was done on both sides without any decisive result. The "London" was in the thick of it, and was so much cut up that she had to return a few days afterwards to New York to refit. Markham also distinguished himself in this action.

Meanwhile things were in a very disturbed state at home. While Jack was at New York, the Gordon riots were taking place in England, his father's house was attacked, and the lives of all the family were in great jeopardy. He received a long letter from the Archbishop telling him of all the stirring events, and of their escape from the imminent peril they had been in.

In January, 1782, Jack was appointed to the "Hinchinbroke" as Lieutenant-commanding, and was sent to cruise off Jamaica to protect trade. In March he was given charge of the fire-ship, "Volcano," and he missed being with Sir George Rodney in the memorable action which established our supremacy in the West Indies, and led to peace being declared between France and England.

In May he received the command of H.M. sloop "Zebra," with orders to cruise off Cape Tiburon. There he had an unfortunate encounter with a vessel which would not show her colours until he fired. She then turned out to be a truce-vessel, with prisoners for exchange. The French Lieutenant in charge professed that the

fault was his, and assured Markham that no blame attached to the latter. Yet on arrival at Port Royal, the Frenchman laid a charge against Markham of wilfully firing on a flag-of-truce and defenceless men. A court-martial followed, and on the false swearing of the French witnesses, Jack was found guilty and dismissed the service.

This was a great blow, but Jack was not the man to submit tamely to injustice, and he was backed by Sir George Rodney, who highly disapproved of the sentence. He returned to England, laid his case before the King, who referred it to Lord Keppel, First Lord of the Admiralty, and the end was that an Order in Council reinstated Jack in the service. He was at once promoted to be Post-Captain, received half-pay for the time he had been out of the service, and then, after a short command, was granted six months' leave on half-pay. The unjust sentence thus became a wind-fall to him, and it further made him many warm friends who resented the treatment he had received.

When in 1783 Jack, now Captain, Markham commissioned the "Sphynx," he was just twenty-two years old. The American War was over and peace ensued for ten years. For the first three years he was cruising in the Mediterranean, and for a time was second officer at Gibraltar, a position of some responsibility. In October, 1786, the "Sphynx" returned to England to be paid off, and Jack, now in his twenty-fifth year, had a term of six years ashore. This long holiday he spent happily among his many friends, and in making lengthened tours on the Continent—one of them being with Lord Wycombe, through Norway, Sweden, and Russia. He also made himself useful at home in connection with the Naval Club, and organised the formation of a fund for the relief of the widows and orphans of members. He also made a trip to Canada and to the States to look after some land in which his father was interested.

On the first of February, 1793, began the great war with France. As we would expect, Captain Markham was one of the first to apply for employment, and in a short time he was commissioned to a fine frigate called the "Blonde," then fitting out at Deptford. The "Blonde" was at first employed as a convoy to merchant traders for Holland, and then she was ordered to join Sir John Jervis—our famous Lord St. Vincent—in his expedition to the French West Indies.

Captain Markham took part in the capture of Martinique, and was sent home with the news, which caused great rejoicing, and evoked the thanks of both Houses of Parliament. Thereafter the "Blonde" joined the Channel Fleet under Lord Howe, and took part in the memorable chase of the great French fleet, which received a tolerable pounding from Lord Howe off Ushant.

Dissatisfied with the secondary place he had to take with a frigate in a great fight, he applied for, and in August of this year obtained, command of a seventy-four-gun line-of-battle-ship, the "Hannibal." With her he was sent off again to the West Indies in Rear-Admiral Colpoys's squadron. On the passage two French frigates were taken, one by the "Hannibal" alone, with a good slice of prize-money to the share of our hero.

This West Indies expedition was one of the great follies of the Great War. The English Government sent a handful of eight hundred and seventy men to conquer San Domingo, defended by six thousand picked French troops and fifteen thousand acclimatised militia. For many dreary months the hopeless struggle went on. The fever was even a greater foe than the French, and the mortality was fearful. In this wretched affair Jack's brother David, a Captain in the Twentieth Regiment, was killed when gallantly leading an attack on one of the forts. This was a terrible grief to Jack, and the whole employment at this time was a heart-break to him. The war-vessels had to remain in port to aid the inadequate land forces, for the drafts sent from England from time to time did not replace the removals by yellow fever. Scurvy broke out in the ships, and the crew of the "Hannibal," in spite of the ceaseless attention and anxious care of her commander, suffered severely. Finally, Jack himself broke down and was sent home invalided. This was his darkest turn of service, and his saddest home-coming.

He now had a spell of a year ashore, and during that time was married to Maria Rice, sister of his old schoolfellow, George Talbot Rice, now Lord Dynevor. Maria Rice was a bright, graceful, accomplished young lady, full of health and spirits, a great reader, but also a great walker; full of breezy sunshine, and the very model of a sailor's wife. Some pleasant months were occupied in visiting various friends, and then Captain Jack was commissioned

to H.M.S. "Centaur." His principal duty, while this vessel was fitting out, was sitting on courts-martial in connection with the Mutiny at the Nore. This over, he was sent with his fine new seventy-four-gun ship to cruise off the south coast of Ireland, to look out for the then expected French invaders. Needless to say, he did not find any, but he found some of his grandfather's old friends, and he had plenty of practice in seamanship during a stormy winter. In April, 1798, he was ordered to join Lord St. Vincent's fleet off Cadiz. Here he had some disagreement with the gallant Admiral—who could be very dictatorial and unpleasant when he chose—concerning the sanitary arrangements of the "Centaur"; but Jack, while he bowed to authority, upheld his own opinion, and in doing so gained the respect of St. Vincent. The two afterwards became firm friends and allies.

Meanwhile, however, an expedition was ordered to Minorca, and the "Centaur" formed part of it. The whole of the next year was employed in chasing, and in active encounters with, the French in the Mediterranean; and later with the Channel Fleet, of which Lord St. Vincent, though very ill, took command at the urgent request of Government, for the more effectual blockade of Brest.

We must shorten our story, however. The Channel service was anxious and rough work, and it was aggravated by an outbreak of scurvy in the fleet. Finally, in February, 1801, Lord St. Vincent resigned his command in order to take the office of First Lord of the Admiralty in Mr. Addington's Ministry, and he invited Captains Trowbridge and Markham, as the two of whom, by close observation, he had formed the highest opinion for judgement and ability, to join the Board as Naval Lords.

Thus, early in 1801, Captain Markham retired from the sea after twenty-six years in the navy and twenty years of varied active service. He was now forty years of age, and in due time he was gazetted Rear-Admiral, Vice-Admiral, and Admiral.

The remainder of Admiral Markham's life was spent in legislative and administration work, and he was especially associated with Lord St. Vincent in reforming the service and overhauling the dockyards. It was Markham who reorganised the Hydrographic Department, who introduced teak timber into the British Navy, and did much other useful work

down to his death in 1827. But we do not dwell on his career as a public servant, as our object was merely to present a picture of a gallant British sailor in one of the most stirring periods of our naval history.

THE WOUND.

FLING the gay stuffs above it,
The scar that the wound has left;
Hide it with glowing flowers,
With fingers quick and deft;
Speak as if never a weapon,
Held in a reckless hand,
Had struck a blow so cruel;
The world will understand.
The world will look and lightly
Say it is all forgot;
The sneer, the lie, the treason
Are all as they were not.
Change is the law of Nature,
And love, and faith, and trust
Are things too fair and dainty
To tread life's common dust.
Only when all is over,
The curtain drawn o'er the play;
When the voice has hushed its pleading,
The smile has died away;
When the corpse is decked for burial,
And things show as they are,
Deep, red and angry, as at first,
I think they'll find the scar.

WINTER LIFE IN COPENHAGEN.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

DENMARK is not a country to visit in winter unless you are fond of a good deal of snow, a low thermometer, and wintry landscapes.

I thought I was fond of these three things; but, all the same, I did not like to form my first impression of Copenhagen at two o'clock in the morning, after a painful passage of the Great Belt—we were four hours late in crossing—and in a snow-storm which, judging from the state of the streets, had already raged some time.

We were a party of about a hundred travellers from the South. The ice in the Belts had got so severe as to threaten Denmark with a general stoppage of communication in its most important part. Instead of a ferry once every three or four hours across the Great Belt, it was all they could do to send the strong ice-boat from Fyen to Zealand once a day. Hence the massing of impatient travellers at the ferry ports, and a complete disorganisation of train services.

It had been a fine experience in its way—this passage of the fifteen or sixteen miles of the Great Belt. The ice was thick nearly everywhere in the journey. It was

a pitchy night, and quite out of the question for the captain to strike the exact route he had made that morning in his voyage from Zealand to Fyen. He had then, of course, broken a passage in the ice, and if we could have retraced our steps things might have been easier for us. But scarcely had we started at seven o'clock when the snow whirled upon us from the north, and it soon obliterated the marks of broken ice, which would also, with the aid of the boat's lamps and clever steering, have served us in our return passage.

Now and then we had come to a dead stop. The flocs in front were not to be overcome without repeated efforts. The more determined of us passengers stayed on deck in our furs and ulsters to see how matters were likely to go. It was worth while doing so for the sake of the vigorous sensations we enjoyed. The boat went on when it could, with a melancholy crunching and grinding of the ice; and when from slow our pace descended to slower, and then to absolute inactivity, it was essential to put the engines astern without loss of time, lest the disturbed ice should pack around us in our trouble like wolves about a disabled horse, and so bind us hard and fast—for an indefinite time.

For an hour it was very tedious work—quite as much backward as forward movement, it seemed. Then, however, we had got more into the middle of the sound, where the ice had not, thanks to the Belt currents, yet had time to become so formidably thick. Even here, however, we were aliding on ice rather than steaming through water. The weighty iron bows of the boat were forced well up by the massing of luggage and ballast in the after-part. The screw ast thus lay deep in the water, out of danger from the flocs, which would else soon have broken it; while the tremendous bows, gliding ahead slowly but surely, fractured a channel for us, through which we crawled to our destination.

And so, instead of coming to Copenhagen at the decent hour of ten, we were set on our feet in its deserted streets—splendid wide thoroughfares, some of them—at the dismal hour of two.

Happily, it was not necessary to trouble about luggage. For my part, I just walked out into the snow and piercing air, and entered the first hotel which showed signs of a night porter. The man gaped, took a candle, and led me to my room. One does not usually in the North, in winter, occupy unwarmed apartments. For once in a

way, however, I endured the chilly atmosphere on this third floor, and it was not long ere agreeable slumber came to me.

The next day broke cold and bright. From my bedroom window I could see hundreds of men with broad wooden shovels casting the snow into heaps. The January sun gleamed on the blood-red new buildings opposite the "Hotel Dagmar." Below, trams were wending their way up and down the spacious street. Above, the lines of telegraph and telephone wires stretched darkly from housetop to housetop.

There was no doubting that I was in a Capital town.

Still less was it possible to doubt it when I ate my breakfast lower in the hotel in a large room of marble columns, gilding and mirrors, with the inevitable German waiter in swallow-tails, talking an English that the Englishman would do better to guess at than attempt to understand methodically.

There were about thirty degrees of frost in the air when I went out to take stock of Denmark's metropolis. Under these circumstances it is vastly more pleasant to go afoot through a strange town than to take conveyance of any kind. Besides, nothing is so educative, in its way, as getting lost in a labyrinth of streets and squares, the relative position of which you wish to understand.

I sought to go due north, in which direction I believed Copenhagen's chief buildings lay. I succeeded in confusing myself very soon in a series of small streets, the houses of which seemed all devoted to the provision of "Breakfasts" and "Coffee." I was in fact in the neighbourhood of the Christianshavn Docks. The frozen canals soon told me this much.

Steamers, three-masted barques, and innumerable smaller ships and fishing-boats were all welded together in the ice of the main channels of the harbour. It was a pretty sight, with the frosty red sun on the horizon. Notice boards were stuck about the harbour telling where the ice was trustworthy, and where it was dangerous. But the continuance of the frost had made these posts obsolete. Mariners and others, bulkily wrapped in woollens, were treading to and fro among the irregular ice floes, regardless of the possibilities of immersion.

Here a fisherman might be seen who was not to be dissuaded from his vocation by Jack Frost. He could not go out upon

the Baltic in his clumsy little green boat, but he still meant to earn his livelihood. He had, therefore, cut a hole in the ice, and thence he ladled out dabs and soles and other fish with such ease and in such numbers, that it seemed as if, for his pocket's sake, he might well pray for January weather all the year round. In fact, however, scarcely one fish in five was saleable. The cold had played havoc with them as well as with the dock labourers, the postal deliveries, the shipping owners, and the capital's supply of coal. For every marketable fish thus netted to the surface, four or five were promptly rejected and returned to the icy deep, to beguile the next fisherman who indulged in a little wintry angling in the same place.

It was odd, too, to see the multitude of sea-birds as well as ubiquitous sparrows that amused themselves on the ice all among the shipping. They seemed as tame as house cats. Indeed it were hard for them otherwise. With the sound between Denmark and Sweden even faster than the Great Belt, the former had scant chances of a dinner of fish of the conventional kind. They had thus habituated themselves to the new state of affairs. The very boldest of them trod the decks of the harbour craft, and openly declared that they expected to be fed by man. The others played the excellent part of scavengers on the ice. For these there was not a little work, if they were to be consistent scavengers. The offal and nasty rubbish of all kinds cast from the vessels out to the ice was bad enough to see. Much of the refuse was of a kind that even the foulest feeding vulture would have turned up his beak at.

From the docks I at length broke into the heart of the town proper, by a canal-side with quaint old gabled red houses, such as one sees in northern towns on the Continent, but in England nowhere. A stately Grecian temple was in front, with a green dome from which the snow had largely departed. The contrast between this building, with its classical portico and pediment, and the old burgher houses adjacent was keen. And yet really it was not a whit more keen than the contrast between the glowing works of the sculptor to whom it is dedicated, and the frigid surroundings of the works themselves. This Grecian temple is the Thorvaldsen Museum—the thing best worth seeing in Europe, north of the Vatican.

For the moment, however, I neglected Thorvaldsen, reserving the joy as a school-boy keeps his comfits.

I passed a Royal statue of bronze, snow-bedecked; then a Royal palace, more than half in ruins; then another canal; a delightful blood-red range of quaint buildings more than two centuries old, though apparently new as hawthorn blossom, and with a unique tower of twisted dragons, their tails tapering skywards; and so into a market square, where a number of old dames were sitting demurely before little tables of frozen fish, flesh, and fowl, as if they held the thermometer in scorn.

Here, among these stiff eels—I could have used one as a walking-stick—and wooden hens, was a charming touch or two of colour. There were small portable hothouses in the market-place, and from their dewy panes, hyacinths, lilies of the valley, sulphur-hued roses, and other tenderly-nurtured flowers looked forth into the frosty air. It were cruel indeed, it seemed to me, to buy these pretty gems for instant execution. If my Danish had not been so lamentably halting, I would have said as much to the flower merchant when he invited me to buy. But he would hardly have sympathised with my fancy.

From the market I struck Østergade, the Regent Street of Copenhagen, and was instantly convinced that the Danish ladies are first in Europe for complexions. Their frosted cheeks seemed to warm the thoroughfare, and there was the sparkle of exuberant health in most eyes. Moreover, how admirably do furs enhance a woman's beauty! It seems easy for a lady in furs to appear graceful.

I suppose in the North fur coats and fur jackets are as needful as dress-suits. And one is glad of it. Nothing in the way of raiment has a better appearance. The railway officials, even though they may wear but astrachan, have a lordly look, that they owe quite as much to their apparel as to their impressive physique, and their inner pride in being able to write themselves down as Government employés. The commercial traveller in catkin and mink inspires reverence; while as for sables, bearskin, and seal, they make robes for gods, and would dignify even the most degraded specimens of humanity.

Hence, no doubt, quite as much as because of their warmth and costliness when new, the extraordinary supply of

second-hand furs in the shop windows of Østergade. One would as soon think of wearing ordinary second-hand clothes as being fitted with one's neighbour's extracted teeth. The same repugnance is not felt for furs that have passed from their first possessor. These are in the like case with diamonds and rubies of price. They can be reset, and it is as if you, their latest owner, then had them first-hand from Nature, with all their charms untarnished.

After the furs the multitude of cigar shops were noticeable. The Danes are great smokers. Cigars are cheap in the land. You do not here, as in Spain, see venerable dames openly enjoying the dear nicotine; but it is the commonest thing in the world to meet a group of schoolboys, not much more than just in their teens, all sucking at cigars while they con their Latin grammars. One bright-looking little fellow whom I later met in the train with a Copenhagen Havana between his lips and a geography manual on his knees, told me he was but eleven. I do not know whether his precocious manners were due to his early introduction to tobacco. Certainly, however, this lad was a wonder of intelligence, self-possession, and politeness. We are told in England and elsewhere that it is extremely bad to smoke until we are quite mature men. Perhaps it is. But the injuriousness of the habit thus early fostered does not seem to affect the Danish constitution as, according to the doctors, it affects us.

And yet to Denmark's credit it must be said that it is not difficult for a person who abhors tobacco to live comfortably in the land. There are non-smoking carriages on the State railways, and the inhibitions are respected. Of course, too, there are also ladies' cars. You are not permitted to smoke in the better class waiting-rooms at the stations, and in the ladies' cafés—a feature of Scandinavia—you are again, equally of course, secure from the intrusive weed. Even in the vestibules of the theatres it is unlawful to light so much as a cigarette.

After its furs, and the tobacco shops, and the ladies' cheeks, Østergade seemed to me mainly remarkable for its trying pavement. The Copenhagen authorities are commendably brisk in getting the snow removed from the streets almost ere it touches the ground. But they do not interfere with youthful sport in the matter of slides. A lad may polish a most

elegant stretch of pavement if he pleases, and no one says him nay. And then, when he is surfeited with sliding, he will have most diverting pastime—if he can spare the time for it—in watching the worthy Copenhagen adults of all classes capsize on the pavement he has transformed into a rink. I dare say there are many doctors at the head of Copenhagen municipal affairs. The winter can hardly fail to provide them with a rich harvest of fractured bones.

From Ostergade I wandered into other streets, some attractive for their shops and some attractive for their buildings. I soon learnt that much margarine is consumed in Denmark. Perhaps the Danes cannot quite help themselves. We take so much of their butter from them that it may be we leave them to the mercy of the margarine makers of Odense and other towns. I also learnt that in Copenhagen it is much the vogue, as elsewhere, to collect foreign stamps; a surprising number of shops had sheets of these little labels in their windows. I do not profess to be an expert at philately, but some of these Copenhagen foreign stamps were the most audacious forgeries imaginable. I believe I could, with pen, ink, paper, pencil, and a common box of colours, have made more "lifelike" specimens myself. One thing I learnt: to wit, that their Majesties of Denmark are much in request of the photographers. It was, at least, interesting to see picture after picture of King Christian the Ninth and his Queen in the shop windows. They were shown seated at ease in their Palace salons and in other positions. I declare that, ere nightfall, I felt quite familiar with the Danish Royal Family.

In truth, King Christian and his Queen seem well to deserve these undoubted tokens of national affection. The King may not be the best extant specimen of a constitutional monarch; but, out of question, he has the welfare of Denmark and his people close at heart. The Radicals here have a great deal to say against the present system of kingly rule, but against the King personally, or about abuses in high places, little enough. As for the people of Denmark, what matters it to the majority of them whether they are despotically or constitutionally governed, so long as the rule is a just and benevolent one which maintains order? The Royal Family do not keep themselves aloof from the ignoble herd. Its youthful members

this very afternoon, for instance, were skating with hundreds of the children of citizens and others on the public ice of the town.

SOLITUDE—AND A CROWD.

ONE can scarcely conceive of any great work having ever been done in the midst of a crowd. A great building may, of course, be raised in the heart of a great city, right before the eyes of a great multitude of men; but the man who planned that building, who made of it a perfect whole before one brick was placed upon another, wrought in solitude, surely! A statesman may find it necessary, for reasons which are on the surface, to live, as much as possible, in a crowd, but when he desires to do any actual work, he gets as far away from a crowd as possible, to some place where solitude shall be his chief companion. A great fortune need not, necessarily, be a great work; but although it may, at first sight, seem strange, it is probable that the greatest fortunes have been made in solitude. Jay Gould, Vanderbilt, Astor, other of the American multi-millionaires, were notoriously solitary men. I saw, somewhere, that Baron Hirsch always prefaced his greatest coups by prolonged periods of solitary communion. I do not know if the statement proceeds from the financier's own lips, but the thing at least is possible.

No doubt there is such a thing as being alone in the centre of a crowd. "I never feel so much alone as when I am surrounded by a number of people;" that, or a similar observation, we all of us have heard. And probably most of us have a moment of self-absorption, even when we are in the gayest, most sympathetic company. I have heard men of business say that, when they desire privacy, to enable them to think out business details, they spend an evening at a theatre or a music-hall. This is like the tradesman who protested that he would not miss going to church on Sunday mornings for anything—if he did, he should get his accounts all wrong. Then, again, there is such a thing as the solitude of a great city; and it certainly is a fact that one may be as much alone in London as anywhere in the wide, wide world. But solitude of some sort one must have, if one is to do work of any kind worth doing.

Take, for instance, literary men—men

whose trade is that of the writer. How often do we encounter works of promise, instances of young authors who have started well, but who, having started, get no farther! One cause for this is, not impossible, what is called society. It is often said that, to a "writing fellow," social success means literary success—that it is the literary man who moves in the "best" society who "gets on." I doubt it. That is, I do not doubt that the man who is seen everywhere may, therefore, "get work" of a kind; but that it is work of a kind I have no doubt whatever. A scribbler may, merely because of his social connections, achieve an income of a thousand, or even of two thousand a year, but that such an one would do good work I take leave to doubt. I am not for a moment suggesting such a patent absurdity as that, merely because a man is born the son of a Duke, or of a Marquis, or an Earl, he is, on that account, incapacitated from becoming a first-rate workman at any trade to which he chooses to turn his hands. I am simply questioning the possibility of a man being able to serve two masters. I say that I question if it is possible for a man to give enough of himself to society to entitle him to be called a social success, and, at the same time, to do good work in literature. It is no answer to point, for instance, to Sir Edward Hamley, to Kinglake, to Hayward, to Lady Brassey, to the long list of men and women who, while holding a recognised position in society, produced literary work which, of its kind, was very nearly as good as it could be. If anything, these persons prove the very point at which I am aiming. First of all, none of them can be fairly said to have achieved social elevation. They were born in the society in which they lived, and moved, and died—therefore none of their work was done before they received what is called social recognition. I would wager a large sum—if I had it—that, in society or out of it, their best work was done when, in some way or other, they had temporarily excluded themselves from society of any and every kind.

I am alluding to quite a different kind of thing. That was a very decent volume of verses which the Honourable Frank Slinger published when he was at the University. He has never written a line, either in prose or verse, worth reading since. The reason, as I understand it, is simplicity itself. When he came down society took it into its head to make of

him a lion—and the Honourable Frank was smashed. Again, take young Slasher. He has done nothing above contempt since "The Kicker Kicked." Why? When he wrote that really clever work of fiction, he was a struggling usher in a country school. "The Kicker Kicked" caught on. His publisher gave him the run of his house—the entrée to a "social circle." The circle increased in circumference—it was joined to other circles. For the first time in his life Slasher found himself somebody, and he lost his head. In his struggles to retain, not the literary, but the social position he had gained, he came to grief. So far as one can judge from the stuff he has lately produced, he is destined to write pot-boilers—and poor pot-boilers at that—for the rest of his life. If he had never "entered society," if he had wooed solitude, and kept out of the crowd, the highest positions in literature were within his reach.

Trollope tells us, in his autobiography, that he was amused by what some of the reviewers wrote of those of his novels of which the scene was laid in Barsetshire. These critics were so struck by the intimate knowledge which he showed of life in a cathedral city. How excellently he drew his Bishops and his Deans! What close studies he must have made of them in the flesh! Over this pronouncement of the pundits Trollope chuckles. He assures us that, before those tales were written, he had never met either a Bishop or a Dean, nor had he met, to his knowledge, any one who had. He knew nothing, practically, of a clergyman of any sort or kind; nor of life in a cathedral city either. He had drawn on his imagination, and on his imagination only, for every life that he had written.

It is universally recognised that the Barsetshire novels contain far and away the best work that Anthony Trollope ever did. Now, some of the wise inform us that, if a man desires to write a good novel, it is essential that he should only attempt to write of what he knows. How does this fit in with Trollope's declaration? Says Quilpen, when you ask him why he frequents five o'clock teas, and garden-parties, and "At homes," and musical evenings, and all the rest of it: "I get my materials from life. If I didn't see life, where should I get my materials?" I believe that many people excuse themselves for always keeping in a crowd, by the assertion that, if they were

not actually, physically, bodily, "in the movement," as the slang has it, they would be out of it. It seems to me that these people—and Qallpen—are a little mistaken.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the less you know of a thing the better you can write of it; though, to a certain extent, even that is true. If you go, say, to a place for the first time in your life to-morrow, it is quite possible that you will be able to give us a better, a more piquant—in a sense, a more accurate—picture of it at the end of a week than at the end of a year. Because, in the one case, the impression will be fresh, and in the other, it will have become dulled by constant repetition. So, also, it is quite likely that you will be able to give us a better and a juster description of a person after a short acquaintance than after the acquaintance of a lifetime. Because, in the one case, your point of view will probably be an impartial one, you will at least see with unobscured eyes; while, in the other, with equal probability, the threads of your two lives will have become so interwoven, so entangled, that not only will impartiality be impossible, but, also, your eyes will have become obscured and dimmed; you will not see any one thing clearly because you see so many. In the great multitude of visions the sense of proportion is lost.

Although the thing must not be pushed too far—for instance, it would be rash to assert that a man is unfitted to write on the rudiments of the Latin grammar because he thinks in Hebrew and speaks in Greek—still, there is truth in the assertion that sometimes the less one knows of a thing the better one can write of it.

"Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits." There is truth, again, in this. I should be the last person to advise any one, in that sense, to keep at home. The individual who, having arrived at maturity, has never been more than fifty or a hundred miles away from the place of his birth is, surely, an individual to be pitied. It may be the fact that "a rolling stone gathers no moss," but, with Lord Dundreary, I should like to know what a stone wants with moss, anyhow. Is it not written somewhere that moss is a synonym of decay? It is certain that the man of average intelligence, who moves hither and thither, in all the highways and byways of the world, does not become mossgrown, and all the better. No, let every man, and every

woman, too, see as much of the world as he or she can; there is a good deal in the world worth seeing, though the oldest inhabitant of Little Pedlington may scarcely think it. But it by no means follows that because one travels, one therefore lives in crowds; the greatest travellers are often the most solitary of beings.

"How much the travelled fool excels the fool who stays at home." I have no reference at hand, but is it not something like that which Cowper says? One would remark, first, that Cowper's was hardly the sort of life one would desire to emulate; certainly he was no great traveller. And, secondly, even he seems to allow that the travelled fool excels the fool who stays at home. And, surely, there is no better recipe for the sharpening even of the dullest wits than the attrition which is inseparable from travel.

The mistake which the man makes who moves in what is called "society," is, that he thinks that, because he moves in society, he therefore, of necessity, sees the world. There is, no doubt, society and society. But society, even at its best, is but a coterie, or collection of coteries, of cliques. Every society has its standards, just as much as Little Pedlington has. You are either of it or not of it; this applies to the "society" of Seven Dials just as much as it applies to the "society" of which so much has been lately written in the magazines. If you are in it, you must obey its rules—and very absurd many of its rules are, just as absurd as the standard of conduct which obtains in Little Pedlington. If you do not obey its rules, you are out of it—you are, as the phrase puts it, "outside the pale of society." No society can be cosmopolitan; the two words are in absolute opposition. For this very simple reason, that the genuine cosmopolitan is not only a man who is at home in every phase of life, but, above all, he is a man who lives just what life he pleases. The life of a man who is in society must, to a greater or less extent, be fettered by the laws of the society, the clique, the set, to which he belongs. And, therefore, it comes to this, that the man who is a member, really and truly an active member, of any sort of society you please—who, that is, lives, moves, and has his being in it—is, necessarily, not a citizen of the world, but only of a fragment of the world, and oftentimes of an infinitesimal fragment, too.

Let a man or a woman, I repeat, see as much of the world as he or she can; but,

unless the pair of them intend to fritter their lives away, let them keep out of the crowd, or, if they must be in it, as some of us must, at least let them not be of it. But, indeed, the advice is superfluous, because the man who does not propose to fritter his life away will take great care that he does not allow himself to become simply one of a crowd, whether the crowd be large or small.

I do not wish to dogmatise—very much the other way. About tastes there is no disputing, and I, for one, have certainly no desire to inaugurate a disputation. If Perkins is ambitious for social success; if he thinks that the only thing worth climbing is the social ladder; if he wishes to gain the entrée of Lady A.'s house, and then of the Countess of B.'s, and then of the Marchioness of C.'s, and then of the Duchess of D.'s, until, step by step, he reaches the august precincts of Royalty itself, and becomes actually "persona grata" with Princes, so be it. I am not suggesting, even by inference, that Perkins's ambition may not be at least as worthy as either yours or mine. But I do say this, that I conceive that it is hardly possible that Perkins proposes to leave behind him any, even the faintest, mark upon the world—any work, of any sort or kind, that will endure. There are some who love work merely for the work's sake, queer though it may seem. And I would respectfully hint that those persons would hardly be wise in emulating Perkins.

Not that a worker need necessarily shut himself off—I am assuming the masculine gender—from the society of his fellow-men, or women. But this he must be: he must be in a position to shut himself from their society when he pleases. He must be, so far, free. To paraphrase, I hope not improperly, the line in the well-known hymn—not to be able to obtain solitude when I desired it, "that would be hell for me." How many persons, poets, divines, philosophers, have given us their ideas of hell! One set of religionists conceive of it as a region of everlasting fire. The Esquimaux think of it as a region of eternal cold. In all sobriety I think that my idea of an inferno would scarcely be the mighty Florentine's—it would be a place in which one would be, for ever and ever, in the centre of a gaping, chattering crowd, in which one could never, never be alone.

Possibly it is a question of temperament, but I, for one, would never like to be a King or Queen, if for one thing only,

because of the "fierce light which beats upon the throne." People cavil at our own Queen because, for so many years, she has come so little into the crowd—society. I, the humblest of her subjects, would—if the humblest of her subjects might so far presume—on that point shake hands with her. Her love of privacy, to me, is Nature's first and chiefest law. I can well understand her saying: "If I cannot have my privacy when I wish and as I wish, I will have nothing." I know, in her place, I should be of the same mind.

Who has not suffered from the incursions of his friends? I know a man who changes his dwelling-place every few months, and for this cause: he says that when he has lived in a place a short time he begins to know people, so he goes. It sounds churlish, but I am not sure that I do not envy that man because he is in a position which enables him to shift his tent at his own sweet will and pleasure. He tells me that some time ago he was in a certain watering-place, and very comfortable he was. You cannot be in a place without knowing people, so he says, and the acquaintance of some very nice people he quickly made. Particularly of two or three men, some of the very nicest fellows he ever met, only, unfortunately, they had nothing to do with their time, except kill it. Unfortunately, as not seldom is the case with men in their position, they could not be made to understand that he could have anything else to do with his time either. They came in upon him at all hours of the day. They wanted him to play cricket, football, tennis, cards, billiards, and all manner of games. They wanted him to walk, to ride, to drive, to row, to shoot, to fish. If they wanted him for nothing else, then they wanted him to talk to, and to talk to them. The man in question is the mildest-mannered man that ever breathed; so far from cutting a throat, he would not, rudely, hurt the proverbial fly. He assures me—and from my own experience in similar situations I find no difficulty in accepting his assurance—that it was quite impossible, without making himself positively unpleasant, to get these gentlemen to understand that there were times and seasons in which he preferred his own society; so he left that watering-place. What is more, he informs me that he has got himself in the same quandary in the place where he is now, so he is going to leave that too.

Men are gregarious animals. Some

more so than others; all now and then. It is the latter class who are the sufferers. Brown plants himself in a country village, say, in the wilds of Andalusia, or of Brittany, as I have done. He wishes to work, and he works. But man is not made to live by work alone. He grows fusty, incapable of work, as Brown is well aware. They tell us that every disease has its remedy, if you can only find it. Brown knows very well, when he suffers from incapacity to work, what is the proper remedy—it is communion with his fellow-men. With a view of applying the proper remedy, he makes the acquaintance of the village inn-keeper; of such of the villagers as frequent his house; perhaps, if Brown is wise, of the local curé; by degrees, of some of the inhabitants of the country-side. If the village is a Breton village, it is ten to one that there is a fellow-countryman not far away, if there are not two or three. Brown makes the acquaintance of the fellow-countryman, or of the two or three. In a marvellously short space of time he finds that he knows all the country-side, that he has made a too liberal use of his own remedy. Because, unless he is the most exceptionally fortunate of Browns, there is sure to be at least one person among his new acquaintance, if there is not more than one, who wants to play when Brown would like to work, and who, to all practical intents and purposes—so contagious is the spirit of idleness!—insists on making Brown his playfellow. So, presently, and perhaps all too soon, the atmosphere of that village becomes too highly rarefied to suit Brown's constitution.

It seems, at first sight, curious that, for a man in Brown's position, there should, practically, be no choice but a choice of extremes; that there should be nothing between knowing too many people and knowing none. Yet, if you enquire into the matter a little closely, you will find that the thing is not so curious as it seems. Selfishness is at the root of it. We all are selfish—I know I am—and I am not so sure that selfishness, at any rate in some of its forms, is quite so egregious a vice as the common conversation of the world supposes. But that is apart from the question.

Brown is selfish; and not only is Brown selfish, but the entire population of that Breton village is selfish. You may be sure of it, because, as I say again, we all are. Brown wants his way, and every creature he encounters wants his way too. It is plain

to Brown that it is impossible for him to yield—for him to do so might be to inflict upon himself an irreparable injury. Exactly the same thing is equally evident to all the other folks as well. And this is the reason why—for the village may stand for the world—those men who are only occasionally gregarious have only a choice between extremes, why they must either know too many people, or else know none. Because directly a man makes an acquaintance, he tacitly consents, while he continues that acquaintance, to adapt himself to his acquaintance. If Jones wishes to make Smith's acquaintance, it would scarcely do for him to preface the expression of his wish by a declaration that he expects Smith at all times, and in all seasons, to adapt himself to his convenience, and that he—Jones—never intends, under any circumstances, to adapt himself to Smith's. If Jones did venture on such a declaration, the odds would be very considerable against the acquaintance ever being made. One acquaintance, therefore, presupposes a voluntary, and possibly even pleasurable relinquishment of, very probably, an appreciable portion of our liberty; and it thus follows, as the night the day, that the more we multiply our acquaintance, the less liberty we leave ourselves. As a man advances in years and—for once in a way, we will take it for granted as a natural corollary—in knowledge of life, the more clearly he realises that in those seasons in which he desires to be a free-man, and to do serious, honest work of any sort or kind, there is for him no choice between knowing too many people and knowing none.

I sometimes hear people say—I trust I may offend no sensitive susceptibilities when I add that they are, for the most part, women—"I cannot endure my own society." Poor creatures! One must be forgiven for suspecting that, if such is the case, other people will be able to endure very little of their society either. Surely men and women, to be worth their salt, must, to a great extent, be sufficient unto themselves. We are born alone, we must die alone; if, during our lifetime, we can never endure to be alone, what invertebrate creatures we must be! Philosophers inform us that, in the deepest sense, we, all of us, always are alone, and, in their sense, the thing is true. It was written up in the temple, "Know thyself!" Well, although a man may not know himself, it is absolutely certain that he knows himself

much better than anybody else ever will or ever can do. We must have all of us been startled, even when in the company of our nearest and our dearest, to find in certain crises of our lives, in certain of our moods and phases, how utterly we have been misunderstood, how completely we have been in touch only with ourselves, how hopelessly we have been alone. But that is not the sort of loneliness Miss Mixer has in her mind when she exclaims: "I cannot endure my own society." She means that she is so resourceless in herself; so destitute of imagination; so incapable of standing erect unsupported; that if she cannot find others like herself to help hold her up, and to help to hold each other up, she will be unable to hide, even from herself, the consciousness of what sort of thing she is. Miss Mixer is by no means alone in her exclamation. Mr. Larkins chimes in, and all the world knows that one would have to have, not nine, but at least ninety Larkinses before one even began to have the making of a man. That is exactly it. When one comes to consider practically the question of solitude, or a crowd, one is confronted by the fact that a largely preponderating proportion of the constituents which go to the making of a crowd consists of the Mixers and the Larkinses.

MY COUSIN COLAS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

WE folk of the village of Frahan in the Belgian Ardennes are a stay-at-home race. We never think of going further than to Sedan on the one side, or Bouillon on the other. We have no reason to travel, and no wish to find a reason. Monsieur le Doyen Hiernaux—who was a learned man, and likely to be right—used to say that this trait in our character was due to the situation of our village, which lies buried in a nook whence we see no distant horizon to tempt us to wander. All around, whichever way we look, are steep wooded hills, girdling the rocky, spur-like ridge at the end of which Frahan is built. Round this spur, and just beneath the encircling hills, the River Semois makes a long, narrow loop. Between the village and the river is a belt of meadow-land, chequered by plots of corn and tobacco plant, while, on the other side of the shallow, hasty current, the slatey rocks, partly hidden by trees, rise precipitously, and the only paths

up them are a stiff climb for any but well-seasoned legs and lungs.

The only person in Frahan, however, who found the path trying was Monsieur le Doyen Hiernaux, who had come back from Brussels—a retired seminary Professor—to spend his old age and economise his pension in his native place. Of course he had been a climber in his youth, but during his long absence he had changed in more ways than one—at least so said my father, who was some kin to him, and who remembered him from old times.

When Monsieur le Doyen had settled down among us, time seemed to hang heavy on his hands. He worked in his garden and tended his bees, and gave the curé what help he could, but still he missed his old occupation of schoolmastering, which had become a sort of second nature to him.

"Ab, Dufiène," he called one evening to my father, as we passed his garden wall on our way home from work. "Ab, Dufiène, I want a few minutes' talk with you, or rather with that big lad of yours. I have a plan which I want to propose to you—and to him."

"At your service, Monsieur le Doyen," said my father, in the respectful tone he always used to his learned kinsman; and I, too, was glad of an excuse to stand at the garden gate for a few minutes—for was it not possible, as we talked to the Doyen, that we might catch a glimpse of his niece, Clémence Servais, who kept his house for him?

"Yes," continued the old nan, nodding to me, "I have a plan in my head concerning you, mon ami. I dare say," and he smiled good-naturedly, "you do not make much use of the little knowledge you picked up at school. What do you say to coming and brushing up your brains once or twice a week with my assistance, and learning to take an interest in something beyond your day's work or your day's play?"

My father glanced at me doubtfully; he knew that book-learning was not much in my line.

"You are very kind, Monsieur le Doyen," he began, while I blushed and stood silent, "but I fear——"

"Wait a moment," interrupted the old man gently. "Let the lad speak for himself. I fancy he is going to fall in with my plan."

I grew redder still. He was right, but if he were so shrewd at guessing my

unspoken words, would he not also guess the motive which prompted them; moreover, what would my father think of the sudden change in my tastes? It required all my courage to stammer awkwardly that "If Monsieur le Doyen did not think me too much of a dunce, I should like it very much."

"I thought so," he replied, with a cheery little air of triumph, "and perhaps you will like it better still when I tell you that you are to have a fellow-pupil. I have already made the same offer to your cousin, the other Colas Dufiène. He accepted at once. He said nothing about being a dunce."

"He isn't a dunce," I began eagerly, for I had a wonderful opinion of my cousin Colas, which, however, my father did not share.

"No, he isn't a dunce," he said, shaking his head, "but he won't be a steady pupil either."

The old priest smiled again.

"I know all about that," he said; "but dear me, Dufiène, if you knew as much about lads as a long experience has taught me, you would know that the madcaps are not the worst sort."

"I say nothing about the worst sort," persisted my father. "I only say that I'm glad my Colas isn't like him."

"But he is like him," rejoined the other, still smiling. "The two might be twin brothers, as their two fathers are."

"That's as it may be," said my father. "Thank goodness it's but an outward likeness. If my lad got into the scrapes my nephew gets into, and played the fool in the workshop as continually, it'd be a sore grief to me."

"Come, come," interrupted Monsieur le Doyen; "you're too hard on him. I call him a nice, open-hearted lad; fond of a bit of mischief, perhaps, but good grit after all. I want to help him to spend his leisure hours better, and you may take my word for it he will turn out well."

"I hope he may," returned my father grimly; "but I've known him longer than you, and I think otherwise."

"Colas," said my father, as we walked homeward, "I'd no notion you'd accept an offer of that sort so quick out of hand. Had you heard aught of it from your cousin beforehand?"

"Nay," I said, "that was the first word I have heard, and I should have said yes all the same, even if Colas had not been mixed up with it at all."

Which was quite true, for the tree of knowledge, of which Monsieur le Doyen offered me to eat, tempted me only for the sake of Clémence Servais.

Clémence was not of our village; she had come from Brussels with Monsieur le Doyen to keep his house, and she differed from any girl I had ever seen in more ways than I could reckon. Her very speech was unlike ours, and when we spoke our patois she did not understand us. She was small and slightly built, with delicate features and a gentle voice; but when I knew her better, I found that her will was as the will of a strong man, and that her heart was as steadfast as the rocks on which our village stood. She always seemed to me far, far above me; yet I loved her so dearly, that for her sake I would have done anything, not to speak of so small a matter as to become the fellow-pupil of my cousin Colas Dufiène, and to receive instruction from so kind-hearted an old man as Monsieur le Doyen. But I was barely nineteen, and I knew that at present there could be no talk of my wooing or wedding; so I bided my time, and kept my love a secret from every one, even from Colas, who told me all his secrets without any reserve whatever.

This friendship of ours was a great subject of uneasiness to my father. He was always afraid lest I should come to any harm through it. Not that there was any real harm in Colas, but he was restless and reckless, and seemed to have a different spirit in him from any of us.

"He may be thy next-of-kin," my father would say, "but I had rather see thee less friendly with him. One never knows where a fellow like that will end." And most people were of the same way of thinking; so that Monsieur le Doyen's opinion of him was quite a surprise to both of us, and doubly inclined me to meet his advances half-way.

The lessons in themselves, after all, were pleasant enough. We sat in the old Professor's snug room, which Clémence had put ready for us, and when we had read a little, written a little, and worked a few easy sums, our teacher would lean back in his arm-chair and tell us some story of bygone times or far-off lands, or some great event which formed part of his own varied experience. When the lesson had reached this stage, Clémence would come quietly into the room and take her place at the table with her work, and then,

however thrilling the story, I nearly always lost the thread of it, as, watching the glint of the lamplight on her golden hair and the quick grace of her deft fingers, I built castles in the air out of my hopes and my love.

But Colas would fix his eyes on the old priest's face, drinking in every word and interrupting now and then with an eager question.

"Ab, Colas," he would say when the end came and we rose to say good night, "that sounds something like! If it was only our luck to see the world instead of droning away here."

"All in good time, my lad," Monsieur le Doyen would answer, "all in good time."

My cousin soon found out that he was a favourite with his teacher, and the two became great friends. So it came about one evening that Colas broached a subject which I knew had been near his heart ever since his childhood—his wish to be a soldier.

"Monsieur le Doyen," he began, "do you not think it a great mistake for a man to spend his life at a trade he hates?"

Monsieur le Doyen smiled.

"I suppose," he said, "that you are the man, Colas, and slate-dressing the trade in question?"

Colas assented; and I wondered how any one could guess so quickly what was in another person's mind.

"But, mon ami," he went on, "you must remember that changing one's trade is a serious matter. You are outgrowing the age of apprenticeship."

"I am not too old to learn to be a soldier," rejoined my cousin.

Monsieur le Doyen raised his eyebrows.

"Ah!" he said, "you have a fancy for wearing a uniform. Well, you will draw in the conscription next year, n'est-ce pas?"

"Draw in the conscription!" cried Colas; "yes, and if I draw a good number—which probably I shall not—I shall be a soldier for three years. I don't want that. I want to enlist to serve because I choose to, and for all my life."

Monsieur le Doyen smiled again. Clémence laid down her work and looked at Colas.

"And why do you not enlist?" she asked simply.

"Because," cried Colas impetuously, "because my father is the best slate-dresser in Frahan, and because he has

made up his mind I must follow in his steps. He even tries to find reasons why I should be exempted from the conscription."

"If that is so, mon ami," rejoined Monsieur le Doyen, "my advice is that you should try to like your present occupation. With a little good will——"

"Mon père," blurted out my cousin desperately, "do not bid me do what is impossible. I was going to ask you to speak to my father for me. He would listen to you."

"My lad," was the grave answer, "I have no shadow of right to interfere between father and son."

Colas's face fell, and before he spoke Clémence began eagerly:

"But Colas gives you the right, mon oncle. Why should you not help him? If his heart is in a soldier's life he will make a good soldier. If he hates the slate quarry, how can he be a good workman?"

I was surprised to see that Colas scarcely gave a glance of gratitude to his unexpected supporter. He only echoed her words.

"Yes," he said, "I should be a good soldier, but a good workman—never!"

Monsieur le Doyen did not speak. He looked from one to the other of us.

"And you, Colas," he said, suddenly addressing me, "do you, too, want to be a soldier?"

"I, monsieur?" I cried, surprised that he, who I fancied could read thoughts, should ask. "No, indeed; I only long for the conscription to be safely over."

Clémence took up her work again, and in the silence her needles clicked audibly. Colas watched Monsieur le Doyen anxiously.

"Lads," he said finally, "it is already late. Good night! Colas, I scarcely think you must count on my pleading your cause."

He did, however, make an opportunity for speaking of my cousin's future with my uncle Marcel, but with no good result.

"I was a fool to set him on," Colas said to me a few days later. "It has been the finishing touch to the whole matter. My father went into a towering rage and told me that if I enlisted I was no longer a son of his. Then my mother made me promise solemnly not to enlist, and now I have no hope but in the conscription. If I draw a good number, and get once into a regiment, who knows what may happen? Ah, Colas, I will make 'neuvaines' to all the saints that I may get that number."

Before long I, too, began to feel as if I must make "neuvaines" that Colas might get his heart's desire, for, from the evening on which Clémence had astonished me by pleading his cause, I had noticed something in her manner which filled me with a vague, cruel jealousy. In vain I tried to persuade myself that I was mistaken; that she felt an equal interest in us both. I saw, in spite of myself, that she had a preference, and that her preference was not for me. Moreover, Monsieur le Doyen began to encourage my cousin to spend more and more of his spare time there, and my uncle Marcel took to looking very wise about the whole affair.

"I've made Hiernaux understand," he said, "that no more nonsense is to be talked about soldiering, and if the lad will only lose his heart to Clémence Servais, who is a tidy girl, and will have a nice 'dot,' he may come to his sober senses about earning his living as a wise man should, and leave off hankering after a uniform to charm the hearts of silly nurse-maids."

But Colas had not lost his heart to Clémence. He even laughed to me one day over some hints his father had let fall.

"As if I should fall in love with her!" he said. "I don't say she isn't pretty and a good sort of girl in her way. But falling in love is not in my line."

Yes, certainly it would be better for Colas to draw a good number and to go away. I could, perhaps, give up my own happiness to him if he stayed, but Clémence's—that was a different matter.

So the winter slipped away, and in the spring came the day when Colas and I and all the other lads of our age in the district trooped over to Bouillon for the "tirage." We went shouting and singing, hiding our nervousness under as much noise as we could make. Only Colas was quieter than his wont. When we reached Bouillon we found a dozen other parties all as noisy and as nervous as our own, and we heard that our "arrondissement" was to send up seventy conscripts. That means that those who drew numbers above seventy could go quietly home and think no more about soldiering.

The drawing began at ten o'clock in the large hall of the "mairie." We were summoned village by village. First our names were called over, then we were measured, weighed, and examined, and a description of each lad was entered in a

great register; finally those who had reasons to give why they should be exempted from service gave them. I had no reason to plead, nor had Colas. Then we were ordered to pass, one by one, in front of a table on which stood a vase containing the numbers. There was a number for every one, even for those who had pleaded exemption; but as the slip of paper on which the number was printed was tightly enclosed in a little wooden case, no one knew his fate until the "scrutateur," who stood behind the table, drew out the paper and read aloud the number, which a clerk immediately entered against the name of the drawer.

"Make haste," said the "scrutateur" when my turn came, and I let my hand linger hesitatingly in the vase. "What do you hope to gain by fingering the numbers?"

I seized one and handed it to him. He drew the paper from its groove and read: "Seventy-eight—Colas Dufrêne, Frahan, seventy-eight; à un autre," and another went and I rushed out into the open air, my heart almost bursting with joy. A few minutes after Colas joined me. There was no joy on his face.

"It is all over with me," he said gloomily. "I wish I hadn't promised not to enlist."

There was great rejoicing in Frahan that night, for not one lad in the village had drawn a number which would oblige him to serve; but my cousin Colas made no secret of his disappointment, and I felt troubled, too, when I thought of Clémence, and of the shadow that was coming between us.

About ten days later, as my cousin and I were on our way to our evening lesson, we saw the burgomaster coming up the street, an official-looking document in his hand.

"Well met," he cried as he reached us. "I was on my way to find you. This"—holding out the paper—"has been sent from the 'bureau de recrutement' for Colas Dufrêne, for which one I can't say."

He looked as if he would like to know the contents of it, but my cousin took it and walked away before he broke the seal. I read it over his shoulder as we went along.

"I see," he cried, before I had mastered its meaning; "they have made out the exemptions, and are calling on the numbers in order to fill the vacancies. And you drew seventy-eight?"

"Seventy-eight!" I gasped; "yes, I did. And is this for me—a summons to march? Mon Dieu! how terrible!"

"Yes," he said bitterly, "for you—that is just how things happen. Curse the whole thing!"

We had reached Monsieur le Doyen's house. He opened the door roughly and went in. There were no books on the table, and Clémence started up as we entered.

"Oh, dear," she said, "I ought to have let you know. I forgot it was so late. My uncle has been summoned to a sick man at Rochehaut—there can be no lesson to-night. Why, what is the matter with you both?" she went on, laughing. "Is it such a disappointment to miss your reading, or are you angry with me for forgetting to send you word?"

"This is what is the matter," cried Colas, throwing the fateful paper down on the table. "Look at that."

She took it up and read it carefully.

"But I do not understand why you are vexed," she said. "This is surely a summons for a conscript in place of one who has proved his right to exemption. Is not that the same thing as if you had drawn a good number? Why are you angry?"

"Because it is not for me at all," replied Colas irritably.

"Not for you?" she repeated, "not for you?"

"I did not draw that number," he went on impatiently; "it is for him." And he made a contemptuous gesture in my direction.

Clémence took up the paper again.

"And you?" she said, turning to me.

"Are you glad or sorry?"

"What is the use of asking him?" interrupted Colas. "What has he always said? He hates the thought of it."

Clémence re-read the summons before she spoke again. Then she said slowly:

"After all it is pure chance who gets a certain number. This seems to me very simple. This summons is to Colas Dufênée."

She paused and looked from one to the other of us. My heart gave a great throb, and I saw my cousin's eyes flash.

"For Colas Dufênée," she went on. "Now, you two both answer to that name, you are both of a height, you are both——"

"But, Clémence," I broke in.

"But, Clémence," she mimicked me. "Now, tell me, which would be better for you: to go and live in some town which would seem like a prison to you, and let home-sickness gnaw the heart out of you, or to stick to a life in which you are happy, and which to Colas is just misery?"

I covered my face with my hands. I wanted to do what was right, but the temptation was very great.

"What is the use of arguing?" she went on. "The moral justice of the exchange outweighs the surface cheating; and then the numbers are mere chance—arbitrary chance. Here, Colas, take the paper—present yourself."

"But," I pleaded feebly, "if we were found out. If the authorities came to know, and I am sure I could never carry it through."

"Fiddlesticks!" retorted Colas, "you are a fool. There is nothing for you to carry through. All you have to do is to hold your tongue."

We talked it over a little more, and in the end it was I who yielded, though, in truth, none of the arguments they used weighed so much with me as the thought that Clémence and I would be drawn closer by a common secret, and that I should be near to her—I who loved her—while Colas, who took no heed of her growing fancy for him, would be far away—for three whole years.

My uncle Marcel was slow to understand the turn affairs had taken. He had looked on the conscription as a danger safely passed, and his anger and agitation prevented his going calmly enough into the matter to detect Colas's deception. Nor was there any difficulty with the authorities. Personally, Colas answered nearly enough to my description to stand in my stead in the cursory examination. As to me, I held my peace and tried to quiet my conscience, and in a few weeks' time, Colas, being a fine, stalwart fellow, was drafted into a régiment d'élite—the Guides—and ordered into barracks at Brussels.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV. THE NEED OF GOLD.

WHEN Philip Gillbanks woke the next morning it was several moments before he could recollect where he was: then the first mental picture which painted itself on his brain was that of the Princess, in all her simple beauty, bending over her embroidery frame and speaking of the work to be accomplished amongst her unregenerate countrymen and women.

"She could accomplish anything she undertook," thought Philip, for the glamour was still upon him. "What a leader of society she would be! And she is the only woman I have yet seen who could carry out Forster's ideal life." Why did the thought of one of them call up the other! Then he remembered her whole-sale denunciation of his own class, and a sad humility swept over him. He knew that much of her accusation was true, he knew that money-getting filled his father's horizon. He knew that his homely mother when alive had found pleasure in her handsome daughter's extravagance and show; he knew that had it not been for Forster Bethune's all-powerful influence he might perhaps have been dragged into a set of horse-racing, betting, pleasure-loving young men, who cared for neither rank, creed, nor learning, but simply for animal enjoyment.

Philip's brave heart could not long be cast down, however. He had a fund of honest delight in life and was full of

generous and unselfish devotion to his friend. If he might not be a leader, he could be the next best thing—a loyal disciple.

These reflections over, he rose and looked out of the window. Daylight revealed but little to him. It was still raining heavily; the mist was in the valley, and crept up close to the walls of the Palace. On his arrival Philip had looked upon the Palace as a public-house; now it was to him a real palace, though certainly one where at present the sunshine was only provided by the presence of the Princess.

When with some difficulty he had found his way to the dining-room, he discovered that several persons had already breakfasted, and that any new arrival was supposed to provide for his own wants. A large fire was burning on the hearth, and on it a kettle was boiling.

To Philip's surprise, Jim Oldcorn suddenly entered. He appeared to be willing and able, in his own fashion, to perform the duties of a butler. The comic mixture of the whole place coming back forcibly to Philip's mind, he could not hide an involuntary smile, especially when Jim Oldcorn addressed him.

"Good day, Mister Gillbanks. Yer a clever fellow to find yer way in this old place; set yourself down and eat what yer can find. The King and the Prince is gan out already. It tuk them varra nar ten minutes to eat enough for the day, and I was waiting to getten yer wishes. If it's Meretoon yer wants I'll show yer the way. Yae's oot of this glen it's straight before yer nose, sartain sure."

"Thank you for your kindness, but I'll find my own way now. I only wish to thank my kind hosts before leaving."

"I'm glad you are not gone yet," said

the Duke, entering. "You can go, Oldcorn. I'll set the gentleman on his way, for I know your master wants you about that wood."

Oldcorn grinned, and Philip, delighted to be allowed a few more minutes at the Palace, slipped a piece of gold into the shepherd's willing palm, which action so much delighted this individual that he could hardly find appropriate words of thanks for his generous benefactor.

"Thank you, sir, thank you, sir, I'martin sure it's kind of yer now. Munny is a yosful thing; widoot it we're as nowte, wid it iverything, as I say to the master."

"Then it shows you are ignorant of most things," said the Duke, smiling and trying to make Philip feel less shy at having his gift mentioned.

"Bat it's deuced bad to keep," continued Oldcorn, without noticing the Duke, "though it can proove o' varra greet sarvis at toimes."

"It's deuced easy to lose," muttered the Duke, still smiling.

When Oldcorn had at last retired, the Duke began to eat his breakfast with a deliberation which seemed to Philip quite out of keeping with the rude surroundings.

"I hope the Princess was not disturbed by the rain," said Philip, taking his courage in both hands, for his chief longing was to see her once more before his departure.

"Oh, no! The Princess has good nerves. Shut in as we are in this lonely and peaceful glen, we need to cultivate some virtues which are not as necessary to the happiness of the rest of the world as they are to us."

"And which are they?"

"Patience, fortitude, belief in oneself, and supreme disregard of others."

"Indeed, it seemed to me, if I might say so, that the Princess would make her mark in any society and in any sphere without any additions to her virtues."

"Naturally, I have brought her up with that view; only one thing more is necessary."

The Duke cut himself a slice of bread, and Philip noticed that his hand shook a little.

"What is that?"

"The Princess must make a rich marriage. You heard her say she must have a golden key, otherwise the portals of society will not open to her. Her society must be of the best, of course. Her rank requires it, and——"

"But——" stammered Philip, who had imbibed all Bethune's unworldly notions about women, believing that they must cast away the ideas of making marriage a stepping-stone to rank. "Surely the Princess can shine without the help of gold!"

"May I venture to guess that you have never known the want of money?"

"That is true, but——"

"Then you cannot understand," and the Duke waved his hand with slight impatience. "There are cases when a man, even a whole family, would make a mark in the world if they had the tenth part of the gold which in some hands is perfectly useless and usually harmful. I have known many," he continued, after a pause, "who knew that a great career must have been theirs if only the first start could have been made. They would have been leading men in politics or diplomacy; they would have astonished their countrymen, and they would have won the love and hatred of thousands; but the bare fact that they could not keep up any appearance has crushed all their ambition, has lost them to the world and to themselves. You are young, Mr. Gillbanks. I do not know if you have any ambition, but if you have, you will, I believe, never feel that it must be crushed."

Philip knew that the Duke must be talking of himself. His young enthusiasm was easily touched by the elder man's hidden bitterness.

"I have often thought this must be the case," he said, "and yet at College there were poor men who struggled through a sea of difficulty and came out of it, somehow managing to beat us out of the field. I must say that in actual life I have seen gold at a discount."

"Because the other cases never came before you—but in one sense you are right. Ambition cannot be killed. If it has to die one death it springs up again in another form. What we could not accomplish ourselves, we hope to see fulfilled in a younger relative."

"You mean that the Princess will——"

"There are stories which cannot be told in cold blood, but you are a stranger and a young man. Perhaps this fact makes it easier to talk to you than to one who knows me more intimately. I shall, I hope, live to see my niece take her rightful position amongst her own set; a position which her birth entitles her to hold, and which her talents—I say it confidently, as I have watched over her

education from her childhood—will enable her to keep. But the first start requires money, and that difficulty I shall overcome."

Philip would have liked to say :

"Let me lay my worthless gold at her feet!" But of course this speech was impossible. Perhaps his eyes spoke, for the Duke smiled pleasantly upon him.

"Tell me about your friend Bethune. I believe I was at College with his father, if so——"

"Forster is not at all like his father," replied Philip quickly. "Mr. Bethune is a mere bookworm, nothing more."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Forster is full of grand ideas which he will work out when he succeeds to his heritage, and even before that time if he has the chance."

"He is a fortunate young man in having such a staunch friend as yourself."

"Oh, I am not the only one," said Philip warmly.

Again the Duke smiled, and Philip did not altogether like the smile.

"Ideas such as you say your friend possesses are like summer snow. I do not mind prophesying that by the time he comes to inherit, he will have divested himself of all reforming vagaries. I have taken care that the ideas of the Princess shall have no foundation in misjudged self-sacrifice."

It was Philip's turn to smile.

"I am sure Mr. Bethune took great pains with Forster's education. He is an only son, and yet all their ideas are diametrically opposed."

"At present."

"And always will be!"

"That remains to be proved. The chances are very much in favour of my prophecy. But you have done your breakfast, and doubtless you are in a hurry to leave us."

"I should like to thank the——"

"Here she is, and the Queen is with her," said the Duke, rising hastily and going towards the door, which he opened with as much ceremonious deference as he would have done had Queen Victoria herself at this moment stepped down from the state bedroom. Philip stood on one side and bowed respectfully as he saw a tall, delicate-looking lady enter the chamber, followed closely by the Princess.

"This is Mr. Gillbanks, the gentleman whom Oldcorn found on the fell," said the Duke, and the Queen bowed slightly as if

a stranger were an object of very little interest to her. She seemed to be a shy, nervous person, with an expression of permanent anxiety—life had evidently dealt hardly with her; she appeared to lean much on her daughter, whose calm haughtiness made a strong contrast to her mother's nervousness. Philip looking only at the Princess again fell under the influence of her strange beauty. This morning she had lost all the excitement she had exhibited the previous evening, and now she merely answered in monosyllables when Philip tried to draw her out. She either considered him of too little consequence, or she was guarded before her mother.

"Jim Oldcorn and the Prince have accompanied the King," said the Duke blandly. "That little feat worthy of Hercules, which they have undertaken, will employ all their leisure to-day, I fancy."

"And very little will be got out of it," sighed the Queen. "That avaricious Leith said the wood was worth nothing at all."

"We may trust His Majesty with a bargain," replied the Duke. "Now, Mr. Gillbanks, if you must leave us, allow me first to show you over the Palace. There are some few heirlooms which are, if not very valuable, at least unique."

Philip took the hint and rose. Bowing low to the Queen he passed on to the Princess.

"I must thank you extremely for your kind hospitality, and I can only say that if at any time I could repay my debt of gratitude, you will have only to command."

"Rash promises," said the Duke, "are proverbially easy to make. Pannie, come and show Mr. Gillbanks the relics. I think he will appreciate them."

The Princess rose a little reluctantly, but Philip noticed that her uncle's will was law to her. In spite of his protestation she now led the way down the long passage.

"Is this the passage where the lady walks?" asked Philip, smiling.

"She would not let you hear her," was the answer, "but this is the room which she guards; any one meddling with our treasures would assuredly suffer for his pains."

The room was small and dark; at the upper end was a glass bookcase of ancient workmanship. The Princess unlocked it, using for the purpose a key which hung at her side.

"This is David Winkell's rapier and his coat. Here are jewels which belonged to his daughter, Penelope Winkell, who was——"

"As proud as the devil," put in the Duke. "Here, you see, are some ancient Bibles, there some iron ornaments, but the Princess must show you the talisman."

Penelope Winkell opened a small box where reposed on the white cotton wool a large pink topaz, set as a locket, through which ran a fine gold chain exquisitely worked.

"This small locket has been transmitted to each eldest daughter of the Kings of Rothery. There is a penalty attached to any Winkell who loses it or gives it away."

Philip touched it with due respect, and as he returned it he touched the fingers of the Princess, and repeated :

"If ever you need help to which no penalties are attached, you must appeal to me."

"Come," said the Duke, "I will now show you the way out of our enchanted glen."

"But," thought Philip to himself, "I must come again."

THE ROMANS AT TABLE.

It is universally admitted that our ancestors, and more particularly those of Teutonic origin, had "strong stomachs," and like Marryat's Jack Tar—or an ostrich—could almost digest "door-nails"; but I am of opinion that in this physical attribute they were altogether surpassed by the mighty men of Rome. What and how these conquerers of the world did eat! The lower orders, the plebs, seem to have devoured anything and everything, however hard, coarse, or flatulent it might be; while the patricians were possessed with a mania for curious and out-of-the-way viands, specially adapted, one would think, to beget and encourage dyspepsia, and find constant employment for the vendors of quack medicines. A dish was prized for its oddity, rarity, or costliness, rather than for succulence or toothsome-ness. Mighty curious reading are the accounts that have come down to us of the great Roman "spreads," such as that which Lentulus gave on his election to the office of Flamen, or that with which Nasidienus mocked Horace and his friends. The menus on these occasions would strike terror to the heart of a modern "maitre

d'hôtel," or "chef de cuisine." What would be thought of a dish of echini, or sea-hedgehogs, of thrushes served up on asparagus, and a fattened hen for course number one? Of haunches of wild venison, and beccaficoes (fig-peckers, "*Curruca hortensis*") for the second? Of a sow's udder, a wild boar's cheek, a ragout of fish, ducks, hares, boiled teal, capers, furmenty, and Picentian bread for the third? The wealthy gourmands of Rome cherished a strong partiality for song-birds. Both Horace and Martial refer with approval to roast thrush; and Ovid recommends "a crown of thrushes" as a lover's present to his mistress. Thrushes' breasts were one of the ingredients of the celebrated Apician dish ("*Patina Apiciana*")—which also included beccaficoes, mushrooms, sow's udder, fish, and chickens—rivaling the heterogeneous contents of a gipsy's "pot au feu." Horace relates that the sons of Acrius, to stimulate their appetite for dinner, lunched "on nightingales of monstrous price." And Varro tells us of the aviary of Lucullus, which was also a "salle-à-manger," so that the epicure gratified his ears and his palate simultaneously, feasting upon the delicate warblers whose congeners, unconscious of their coming doom, were discoursing meanwhile the most exquisite music.*

For fish the Roman appetite was nobly comprehensive. It particularly delighted, as everybody knows, in oysters—in the Rutupian ("*Rutupinae edita fundi*," says Juvenal), imported at great cost from the shores of remote Britain, and the Lucrine, which were of home growth. Also in lampreys—of which, as our school histories remind us, Henry the First partook to such an excess as to induce a fatal illness. Violius

* The taste for blackbirds and thrushes (says Roque) has descended from the ancients to the moderns. They are much appreciated in Germany and in the south of France. The Corsican and Provençal blackbirds are renowned above all others, because they feed on myrtle and juniper berries. Cardinal Fesch, Archbishop of Lyons, had a supply from Corsica every year. One dined at his Eminence's table partly because of his affable manners and the gracious reception he accorded one, and partly for the sake of his blackbirds, the flavour of which was exquisite. More than one Lyonnese gourmand waited impatiently for the archiepiscopal clock to strike six, and for these delicious birds to be served up, delighting every guest with their fragrance and their fascinating appearance (*tournaure*). Their backs were ornamented with a tuft of fresh sage, imitating the tail with which they are provided, when perched upon elm or hawthorn, they pour forth their melody. I say nothing (adds Roque) of the fine oil in which they were cooked, nor of the savoury toasts, the pungency of which strengthened one's stomach while they perfumed one's mouth.

Pellio fattened them for his table by throwing a disobedient slave now and then into his "vivaria" or fish-ponds. Julius Cæsar served up six thousand, it is said, at one of his triumphal banquets. Also in mullets, of which the great orator Hortensius was so immoderately fond that for three rather fine ones he once gave a thousand sesterces. Also in the conger-eel, which nowadays seldom appears on our tables except in the form of turtle soup. Also in fat pike, anchovies, sturgeons, mackerel, tunny, turbot, gurnard—the "cornute," whose horns, says Pliny, were sometimes eighteen inches in length. Also in various kinds of shell-fish, such as "balanus," "peloris," and "spondylus."

The principal meal of the Romans was called the "cœna," which, as it was the last meal of the day, is generally translated "supper," but in all essential respects it answered to our modern "dinner," and as such I shall treat of it. Let us attend that which was given in honour of the polite and cultured Augustan statesman Mæcenas by the opulent Nasidienus. The other guests, on this occasion, are three patricians, and Mæcenas has brought with him as his "umbrae," or uninvited guests, a couple of jesters to make sport when the conversation flags. The company is completed by the presence of a "Nomenclator," whose duty it is to point out with his forefinger any dish that seems likely to escape observation, and thus to prevent the cook's labours from being uselessly expended. The host has spared no expense, as theatrical managers say, in getting up the entertainment, but, unfortunately, the want of a refined taste and a cultivated judgement has marred everything, and an unskilful cook has spoiled some of the costliest dishes. The "cœna" is a "coup manqué"; but the programme for the occasion illustrates the lordly scale on which the wealthy men of Rome ordered their entertainments. What the cost of it may have been, Nasidienus does not inform us. On one occasion, however, Lucullus—of whom hereafter—spent one thousand pounds, though there were only three persons at table—Cicero, Pompey, and himself. Vitellius is said to have wasted three thousand pounds on his dinner daily, but in these figures I suspect a good deal of exaggeration.

That was an ingenious idea of the Emperor Geta—as many courses at dinner as there were letters in the Latin alphabet, and in each course the name of every dish to begin with the same letter as that of the

course. I strongly recommend it to the notice of the millionaires who nowadays advertise themselves into notoriety by giving dinners. As Nasidienus lived before Geta got an opportunity of making the civilised world his plaything, he could not adopt this idea, but in the arrangement of his courses was governed by common usage. As thus:

First is served up a Lucanian wild boar, captured when the southern airs blew gently, and, therefore, supposed to be of exceptional tenderness. Around it lie heaps of rape, lettuce, and radish; also a liberal supply of skirwort, pickled shad, and the acid lees of Coan wine, all intended to stimulate a jaded appetite. The reader will call to mind that Horace, in one of his Satires (Book II, Sat. iv.), boasts of having been the first to compound a sauce of fish-pickle and burnt tartar—i.e., the crust which adheres to the inside of a wine-cask. With this course are handed round cups of Chian wine and Cæcubian.

Next a pile of plaice and turbot* smokes upon the board, accompanied by a plentiful provision of honey-apples—"melimela," which, however, ought properly to be reserved for a later stage of the repast. Then a lamprey, surrounded by floating prawns; the fish being full of spawn, its flesh is uncommonly firm and good. The sauce is one of exceedingly artistic concoction—the celebrated "garum," made originally from a small fish which the Greeks called "yapos," but afterwards from the intestines of the mackerel. There are also home-brewed wines; oil from the famed vats of Venafrum; a vinegar made from Lesbian wine, and white pepper. Eat, my friends, and be merry! May good digestion wait on appetite—though these be surely things to try the strongest digestion! To say nothing of the stewed elecampane and the pickled green walnuts—two dishes which Nasidienus claims as of his own invention.

The last course which he sets before his guests includes a crane, cut up and grilled,

* "Turbot," says Grimod de la Reynière, in the "Almanach des Gourmands," "is the ocean-pheasant, because of its beauty. It is the king of Lent, because of its noble proportions. Generally it is served 'au court bouillon.' It has all the simplicity and majesty of a hero, and every kind of ornament offends instead of honouring it, except on its second appearance, when it may fitly be disguised. The best mode of accomplishing this is by dressing it 'en Béchamel'—so-called after the Marquis de Béchamel, maître d'hôtel to Louis the Fourteenth, who immortalised himself by this one ragout—in which the special feature is the use of cream.

and freely besprinkled with flour and salt; the livers of geese which have been fattened upon luscious figs; "the wings of hares" ("alæ leporum"); roasted blackbirds—which reminds us of the "four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie" of nursery fame; and ringdoves fricasseed.

One cannot but be struck with the Cleopatra-like variety of the dishes placed before the Roman diner-out. Every taste seems to have been catered for, and the most fastidious could hardly go away dissatisfied. I suppose this was also the distinctive "note" of the entertainment which Cicero provided for Julius Cæsar, when the latter paid him a visit at his Tusculanum, his charming villa at Tusculum, on the slope of Mount Algidus, looking out over the waters of the blue Mediterranean. I confess I wish I could have been present on that occasion. Why was not the phonograph then invented? The talk between the great statesman and general and the famous orator and philosopher—who would not like to have listened to it?

In a letter to his friend Atticus, Cicero describes this memorable "cœna," which had been the cause of profound anxiety, as he could not but remember how active an adversary he had been of the master of Rome:

"What a formidable guest I have had! Still, I am not sorry, for all went off exceedingly well. On the evening of December the eighth he arrived at the house of Philippus, which was so crowded with soldiers that there was scarcely a room where the great man himself could dine. I suppose there were two thousand. I was really apprehensive of what might occur next day; but Barba Cassius came to my relief, and gave me a guard. The camp was pitched in the park, and the house strictly guarded. On the ninth he was closeted with Philippus till one o'clock in the afternoon. . . . After this he took a stroll on the shore, and then came the bath. He heard the epigram to Mamuna [a scurrilous one], but showed no annoyance. Then he dressed for dinner, and sat down. As he was under a course of medicine, he ate and drank without disquietude, and in the pleasantest temper. The dinner was sumptuous and elaborate; and not only this, but well cooked, and seasoned with wise converse. The great man's attendants were also entertained most liberally in the other rooms. The inferior freedmen and the slaves had

nothing to complain of; the superior kind had a reception which was even elegant. Not to say more, I showed myself a genial host. Still, he was not the kind of guest to whom one would say, 'My very dear sir, you will look in and take pot-luck the next time you are passing, won't you?' Nothing of political moment occurred between us, but much talk about letters. . . . He was gratified, and seemed pleased with his host."

A standing dish on the dinner-table of the opulent Roman was a peacock. It is said that Hortensius, the orator, was the first to introduce it. Whoever may have been its sponsor, it rose into a rapid popularity. Cicero somewhere says that he was bold enough to invite Hirtius to dine with him, though he could not give him a peacock. Horace, in the second Satire of his second book, makes his peasant interlocutor, Otellus, rail against it as a useless luxury. Hens and peacocks, he says, are alike in taste—are they?—but the latter is preferred simply because of the unequalled beauty of its brilliant tail and its exorbitant cost.

Brehm informs us that the flesh of the young bird is very delicate, and has "a wild odour" which is very agreeable. He thinks an old bird fit only for stewing. The Greeks must have found it marvellous costly feeding, if it be true, as Ælian says, that a single bird was worth a thousand drachmas—nearly sixty pounds. The esteem in which it was held in the last days of the Roman republic did not diminish under the Imperial régime. Vitellius and Hellogabalus served up to their boon companions enormous dishes of peacocks' tongues and brains, seasoned with the rarest Indian spices. In mediæval days it was still held in favour, particularly as a Christmas dish, and minstrels sang of it as "food for lovers and meat for lords." To fit it for the table was no ordinary culinary operation. After the skin—and plumage—had been carefully stripped off, the bird was roasted; then served up again in its feathers, with gilded beak. No; I have forgotten that it was first stuffed with spices and sweet herbs, and basted with yolk of egg. It floated in a sea of gravy, as many as three fat wethers sometimes supplying the unctuous liquor for a single peacock. No vulgar hands carried it to table, but the fairest and most illustrious of the dames and damsels present at the feast, and its arrival was announced by strains of

triumphal music. Had the bird known the honours reserved for its obsequies, surely it would, like Keats, have fallen "half in love with careful death."

"By cock and pie!" exclaims Justice Shallow—little knowing that his every-day ejaculation referred* to the old chivalrous usage of swearing over this lordly bird to undertake any grim enterprise worthy of a gallant knight. Did not the royal Edward make oath on the peacock before he entered upon his invasion of France?

War to the knife seems first to have been waged against the stork in the reign of Augustus, when Rutilius Rufus, a candidate for the prætorship, regaled the electors with storks ad lib. I am pleased to add, however, that the slaughter of this familiar bird, which has never disdained the companionship of man, was avenged by the refusal of the people to elect its murderer.

Galloni^{us}, the public crier, a notorious glutton, whom Lucilius nicknamed Gurgus—as one might say, a Vortex—was the enterprising spirit who first dined off sturgeon; an extravagance which made him the object of severe censure:

The fame

Of a whole sturgeon damned Galloni^{us}' name.

Everybody knows, of course, the famous Dianer after the Manner of the Ancients, which Smollett, in ridicule of Akenside's classical affectations, introduces into his novel of "Peregrine Pickle." It was suggested to him, perhaps, by Dr. King's humorous proposal of a recherché entertainment to Gaspar Barthius, which was to consist of "a salacacaby," a dish of fennugreek, a wild sheep's head and what Sam Weller would call "trimmings," an electuary, a ragout of capons' stones, and some dormouse sausages. Most of the dishes which Smollett describes he has borrowed from the cookery book of Apicius—"Apicius Coelius de Re Coquinari"—but he sometimes omits certain of the ingredients which may have modified their flavour, and subdued, perhaps, that strong odour which, according to Smollett, so affected the nerves of the company, that "one man took snuff, another resorted to the device of breathing only through his mouth, while a third in desperation plugged his nostrils with tobacco."

The first dish was a boiled goose, served

up in a sauce composed of pepper, lovage, coriander, mint, rue, anchovies, and oil. The host, in recommending it, expressed his regret that it was not one of those geese of Ferrara, which the ancients so highly esteemed on account of the size of their livers, weighing sometimes as much as a couple of pounds. At each end of the table was a dish of the Roman "salacacabia," or hotch-potch; one made of parsley, pennyroyal, cheese, pine-tops, honey, vinegar, brine, eggs, cucumbers, onions, and hen livers; the other identical with our ordinary "soup maigre." There was also a loin of boiled veal—which Macaulay so detested that there was only one object in the world he hated more, and that was John Wilson Croker—with fennel and caraway seed, in a pottage composed of pickle, oil, honey, and flour; besides a curious hash of the lights, liver, and blood of a hare, and what was much more to the taste of the guests, a dish of roasted pigeons. Over this last appetising plate ancients and moderns might join hands—and appetites—most cordially.

The effect of the classic messes on the unaccustomed stomachs of the guests at this strange banquet is described by Smollett with a plainness I dare not imitate. When a partial rehabilitation had taken place, another course was put forward, in which were several of those preparations dignified by the ancients as *πολυτελής*, or "magnificent." In the centre seethed a cow's stomach, filled with a composition of minced pork, hog's brains, eggs, pepper, cloves, garlic, aniseed, rue, ginger, oil, wine, and pickle. On the right-hand side, a sow's udder, fried with oil, sweet wine, flour, lovage, and pepper. Sow's udder, by the way, ranked high among Roman delicacies; it was one of the four ingredients which entered into the Emperor Hadrian's favourite dish, the "Tetraphamiacum"; the other three were peacock, pheasant, and a gammon of wild boar in paste. On the left, a fricassee of milk-fed snails. At the bottom of the table were fritters of pompions, lovage, origanum, and oil, with a couple of pullets roasted and stuffed according to the recipe of Apicius.

This course, however, proved no more satisfactory than its predecessor to the delicate appetites of the physician's guests. It was evident that the dishes of the ancients, unlike their writings, were not to the taste of the moderns; and the rejoicing was general when the dessert made its

* There is of course another—and probably better—etymology: "By God's pie," "pie" being the service-book of the Roman Church.

appearance, for it included plain olives in salt and water. These gave an agreeable relish to the champagne, and the guests fastened upon them with avidity, leaving the host to sing unheeded the praises of "a sort of jelly," which he affirmed to be preferable "to the hypotrimma of Hesychius, being a mixture of pickle, vinegar, and honey, boiled to a proper consistence, and candied *asafoetida*, which he asserted, in contradiction to Aumelbergius and Lister [commentators upon Apicius] was no other than the 'lusa Syriacum,' so precious as to be sold among the ancients to the weight of a silver penny."

I have omitted to mention the dormouse pasty, flavoured with sirup of wild poppies. Smollett borrowed it from the dish of dormice described by Petronius Arbiter as an item in Trimalchio's banquet. There they are represented as sprinkled with honey and roasted seed of white poppies; and set as an opposite dish to hot sausages—of what frightful ingredients were these composed!—beneath which was a mimic pie of black damsons and red pomegranate grains. Trimalchio's bill of fare, by the way, included several viands which would be by no means unacceptable on a Victorian dinner-table; while Smollett, in his imaginary banquet, has collected all the nastinesses he could find in Apicius or elsewhere.

The sow's udder was one of those Roman "dainties" which the modern "chef de cuisine" deliberately ignores. In his invitations to his friends, Martial frequently puts it forward as an attractive feature, and it is "favourably mentioned" by nearly all the Latin poets from Plautus downwards. In Trimalchio's feast it figures "vis à-vis" to a hare whose "wings"—or shoulders, "*a/s*"—have been trimmed à la Pegasus; in Smollett's it is served up stuffed, as the reader has seen. According to Pliny, it was in the best condition when cut off within twenty-four hours of the animal's farrowing, and before she had suckled her young. It was improved in flavour, said the epicures, by being steeped in the salt liquor of a tunny fish. I am here reminded that "a sow's pap" is one of the gastronomic luxuries enumerated by Sir Epicure Mammon, in Ben Jonson's "*Alchymist*," when indulging himself in a vision of the pleasures which the discovery of the philosopher's stone will bring within his reach. His whole catalogue may here be quoted, as Ben Jonson evi-

dently took it from the ancient cookery-books:

We will eat our mullets,
Soused in high-country wines, sup pheasants' eggs,
And have our cockles boiled in silver shells;
Our shrimps to swim again, as when they lived,
In a rare butter made of dolphin's milk,
Whose cream does look like opals. . . .
My footboy shall eat pheasants, calvered salmons,
Knots, godwits, lampreys: I myself will have
The beards of barbeles served, instead of salads;
Oiled mushrooms, and the swelling unctuous paps
Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off,
Dust with an exquisite and poignant sauce.

It would obviously be absurd for the author of a "classical romance," intended to reproduce the manners and customs of the ancients, to pass unnoticed so important a function as the dinner. Lockhart, however, in his brilliant story of "*Valerius*," touches upon it very lightly. He takes his hero to a superb feast given by a wealthy widow, named Rubellia, and he shows us the banqueting-room, from which all light was excluded, save that which streamed from golden candelabra, and from broad lamps of bronze suspended overhead from the high and painted ceiling; and tells us of the guests, twenty in number, reclining on one demi-circular couch, the covers of which were of the softest down, and the framework inlaid with ivory.

"We had no sooner taken our seats," says his hero, "than a crowd of slaves entered, carrying large boards upon their heads, which being forthwith arranged on the table, were seen to be loaded with dishes of gold and silver, and all manner of drinking vessels, also with vases of rare flowers and urns of perfume. . . . The trumpet sounded a second time as if from below, and the floor of the chamber was suddenly, as it were, pierced in twain, and the pealing music ushered up a huge roasted boar, all wreathed with stately garnishings, and standing erect on his golden platform as on a chariot of triumph." But here, when we seem about to plunge "in medias res," the author abruptly checks himself and us: "Why," he enquires, "should I attempt to describe to you the particulars of the feast? Let it suffice that whatever idea I had formed of Roman profusion was surpassed." This abrupt dismissal of the subject is unsatisfactory, for a good many readers will have formed no idea of Roman profusion, and will, therefore, be left in the lurch.

Lord Lytton, in his "*Last Days of Pompeii*," has revived the Roman "*cœna*" with a good deal of vivid colouring and

picturesque detail. At the ample banquet given by Glaucus wild boars were provided; also oysters from Brundisium; an Ambrasian kid; and a course of fruits, pistachio nuts, sweetmeats, tarts, and confectionery "tortured into a thousand fantastic and airy shapes." I have omitted to notice the "preparative initia"—delicious figs, fresh herbs strewn with snow, anchovies, and eggs. The wines of which Glaucus and his friends partook were Chian, fifty years of age, and Lesbian, which was comparatively new, but had been matured by being put to the fire.

This was the kind of dinner given by a young Roman patrician. It will be interesting to compare it with the menu of a Victorian dinner given at any first-class London hotel or restaurant.

On the whole, I should give the palm for picturesqueness to the Pompeian dinner. There is nothing in the Victorian to match with "the wild boar" and "the Ambrasian kid."

One of the best attempts—perhaps it is the best—made by modern writers to reproduce the ancient "cœna," is that of Professor Bekker, in his "Gallus: or Roman Scenes of the Time of Augustus." Of course, he closely follows that "cœna Trimalchiana" of Petronius, to which I have so often referred; but he makes it pleasantly intelligible to that exacting individual, the general reader. The book is easily accessible, but it will be convenient, perhaps, to transcribe a few passages from the description of the "cœna."

Well, then, let us imagine the dining-hall suitably decorated; the nine guests—the number of the Muses, and a favourite number with the Roman dinner-giver—seated on their "lecti," or cushioned couches, with an air of pleased expectancy on their dignified countenances, having previously performed their ablutions and removed their sandals. A couple of slaves enter, and deposit on the table the dishes of the first course. Observe in the centre an ass of bronze, loaded with silver panniers, which are filled with white olives and black, and astride of it a jolly Silenus, from whose wine-skin flows a delicious "garum."

By the way, Lord Lytton, in "The Last Days of Pompeii," places in the middle of the table of Glaucus a "beautiful image of Bacchus."

Close by the Silenus, rarely-dressed sausages smoke upon silver gridirons, beneath which are mimic pies, made up

with black Syrian plums and scarlet pomegranate seed. Silver dishes stand all about, containing asparagus, lettuce, radishes, and other garden products, in addition to "lacerta," flavoured with both mint and rue, the Byzantine "muria," and cooked snails and lobsters. The guests fall to, for a while there is silence, and meanwhile the noiseless slaves glide round with the "mulsum," a mixture of Hymettian honey and Falernian wine, in golden goblets.

A second and smaller tray now makes its appearance. Here, in an elegant basket, sits a skilfully-carved wooden hen, with wings outspread, as if she were brooding. From underneath it the slaves take out a quantity of eggs, whereof they distribute to the guests, together with a silver "cochleare" or spoon, which is used for breaking them. On examination, each egg is found to be made of dough, and to enclose a plump "beccafico," or fig-pecker, seasoned with pepper. As soon as these are disposed of, enter a procession of boys, wearing green garlands, and carrying well-gypsumed amphoræ, brimful of sparkling Falernian, nearly a century old. After the guests have drunk, and disposed of these "preparative initia," the first course of the "cœna" proper is served, and each man may slake his appetite as he will—tempted by ringdoves and fieldfares, capons and ducks, mullet and turbot—or by the fatted hare in the middle, which the cook, with the help of artificial wings, has converted into the highly popular device of a Pegasus.

The second course is heralded by a flourish of horns; it consists of a huge boar, surrounded by eight sucking-pigs—or rather their skilfully-wrought effigies in paste,—and with tiny baskets, woven of palm-twigs and filled with Syrian and Theban dates, hanging from its tusks. The boar is pronounced to be a real Umbrian; but before the guests have made much way into it, the slaves appear with a fresh "ferculum," in which smokes a great fat sow, cooked like unto its Umbrian congener. Lentulus, the host, pretends that the cook has forgotten to disembowel the animal, summons him into the presence, and rates him soundly; whereupon the cook flourishes his knife, makes two dexterous incisions in its belly, and lo! a quantity of all kinds of little sausages tumble out. This pantomimic trick, which was not uncommon at great Roman banquets, is received with immense applause.

In due time the slaves remove both board and sow, and dishes of peacocks, pheasants, livers of fat geese, and rare fish are presented. Then the *débris* of the feast are cleared away, and the slaves strew the floor with fresh sawdust, which has been soaked with minium and sweet-savoured saffron. From this cleansing operation the attention of the guests is diverted by the sudden opening of the ceiling, and the descent of a large silver hoop, hung with unguent bottles of silver and alabaster, silver garlands, and other trifles, to be shared among them, like the gifts in a modern cotillon. After this agreeable interlude, everybody settles down to the dessert and discussion, the latter dealing chiefly with light themes of art, literature, and the former comprising ingenuities in pastry, artificial mussels, fieldfares stuffed with almonds and raisins, melons cut into various shapes, and savoury quinces. At last, having dined well if not wisely, the guests adjourn to the baths or colonnades, and afterwards reassemble for a symposium and drinking bout, to which it will be unnecessary for us to follow them.

"GILES."

A COMPLETE STORY.

EVERY one was surprised to hear that Giles had started a love affair. He was always ready for most things, but no one expected him to take up anything of that sort. The Dominie always maintained that Giles had become engaged, because "she" somehow had presented the idea to him, if she had not actually proposed to him. The Dominie always regarded himself as a shrewd man. He was particularly annoyed, whereas every one else was merely amazed. Giles was red-haired, freckled, ugly; it is true that he had a broad, big smile, which gave him a hearty look, but otherwise he was distinctly ugly. And he was big, enormously big, and could turn his hands to everything but his own occupation.

"Giles will settle," said the Dominie sententiously. He taught in school, and preached didactically out of school. "Let him alone. Some day he will come back as a Scotchman whose name the world will know." To come back the Dominie first meditated sending Giles away. "He will not be a genius here," he said, waving comprehensively towards the village to whoever his auditor was. "But away in a bigger world——"

It was the overthrow of all this that was so discomposing to the Dominie when Giles came to him and said:

"I'm gaun to be mairrit."

"Lord," said the Dominie aghast. "Are ye mad?"

Giles had come with a befitting solemnity, but the Dominie's *neiveté* was too much for him. His whole face expanded into a smile, and then he broke into a chuckle.

"Mebbe that explens it," he said, when he subsided.

They talked it over.

"Giles, you will never leave this village now. You have done nothing yet, and certainly after your marriage you will do nothing."

The Dominie fairly groaned in anger. He was single himself, but he felt that the accident of his profession had kept him tied to the little village of Longton, and prevented his doing all he had meant to do in his early life. He had meant to live all these old ambitions over in Giles, to send the lad forth, to write to him, moralise over him, and watch the slow developement of his character. It had all ended in the old, old story of love and a woman. Report said the Dominie had once loved. Certainly he was cynical in his old age. "*Cherchez la femme*," he said, whenever problems were laid before him. He said it in Doric, but it was the same idea.

"Well, Giles," he ended up, "I hope you'll be happy. I won't say I'm glad; all we can do is to make the best of it."

Giles felt as he used to do after an interview with the Dominie in olden days—for instance, the interview after he had tarred the seat in the miller's pew, and the miller had only found it out when he had tried to rise for the first singing. The miller had gone over to another church after that, and the Dominie had taken Giles in hand. He had taken the idea from a parish tradition of the year 1630, and it was the Dominie—who studied these things—who had read the tales to Giles. But his engagement seemed to pain the Dominie more than even any of these old escapades.

"I niver said I would na' mairry," muttered Giles as he went out.

He felt rather damped in his new-born elation. Truth to tell, it took Giles a little time to get over his own engagement. Loui Ross was very pretty, but every one was in love with her. Giles alone had failed to pay her any attention.

"Sandy brings me sweets, Giles," she once said to him persuasively, but Giles never made any use of the hint.

It was at a tenants' dance that Giles became suddenly jealous of this Sandy, and that an unconquerable desire to cut him out possessed him. Loui was dressed in pink cotton. She had copied the dress from that of one of the ladies staying at the Castle, and it was exquisitely simple. Her fluffy golden hair curled naturally over her head. She had conventionally blue eyes and long eye-lashes, and Sandy never left her side. A long schottische came towards the end of the dance; Sandy and Loui never stopped. They jogged opposite each other, and whirled round together and in time to the ceaseless strains of "Weel may the keel row." Giles was dancing with a partner who did it solemnly and heavily. They kept getting out of time, and Giles frowned. Loui laughed and pointed them out to Sandy.

"Begin it earlier next time," said the latter, whose world was a hazy vision of gold and blue and pink, and who could afford to be facetious.

Giles turned sharply.

"Dae it wi' me," he said sternly to Loui. He did not look at his ignominious partner, whom he left open-mouthed, nor at the wrathful Sandy, who stood too dumb-founded for words. "Dance this wi' me, and ye'll see if I gang oot o' time."

Loui obeyed with a fascinated submissiveness.

"Faster," shouted Giles to the fiddlers; "and dinna stop till I bid ye." On and on they danced, Giles seizing Loui when she gave signs of fatigue. Faster went the "Keel row," till Loui gasped:

"Stop, Giles, I canna' dae it." Then Giles whirled her out of the group of dancers.

"Canna' I dance?" he demanded.

"Ay, Giles," said Loui, putting her eyes humbly down. In her soul there was a great triumph. Woman-like she recognised that she had made a beginning, and woman-like she appreciated the method of Giles's capitulation. "Better 'n maist," she added diplomatically.

She made it up with Sandy afterwards.

"He stood there glowerin'," she said meekly to that irate lover, "and what cud I dae?"

It created a fierce rivalry between the men. After that Giles saw a good deal of Loui. He did not know, but she did, that they gained a good deal of ground in

these interviews. One evening, some time after, Loui was standing against the hedge which shut in the untidy little garden, where the flowers grew as they best could. Behind the cottage there was a fir-wood; the wind was always playing in the branches, even on still days, and the pigeons cooed perpetually. The hedge was privet, and scarlet tropæolum straggled over, and through, and under it, in every direction. It made an effective setting, but Loui stood there because the road passed along the end of the hedge. Giles sauntered past presently.

"Is it you, Giles?"

"Ay, is't. Wha were ye expectin'?"

Loui coquetted.

"I dinna' ken."

"Wis it Sandy?" he asked, getting suddenly interested.

"Mebbe it was."

She had gone into the garden every evening in the hopes of Giles passing. She was weighing him critically in her mind as he spoke. Some day she meant to have the crisis that invariably arrived. She had not quite decided if she should throw over Sandy.

"Deed," said Giles, frowning down on her as she stood there, small and slight, against the dark hedge with the red creeper. "If ye are waitin' Sandy, I need na' bide," and he turned to go.

"Giles," said a soft voice. "Giles."

He turned.

"Well?" he said ungraciously, over his shoulder.

"Giles, it wisna' Sandy I hoped to see."

"If it wisna' Sandy you waited, wha wis it?"

There was no answer. The pigeons cooed ceaselessly in the waving fir-trees, while Giles's love-tale was going on; but neither he nor the girl listened to them. Loui looked up again, but she did not say anything. A wild thought flashed through the man's mind.

"Loui," he gasped. "Tell me, for I dinna' unnerstan', wis it me ye were seekin'?"

He felt on the verge of a hazardous discovery in his life. An inspiration came to him that Sandy had failed. At this juncture love was merely a feat of strength.

"If ye dinna' care if I wis seekin' ye or no——" began Loui, plaiting her fingers and turning away ever so slightly.

He just saw the turn of the head, and the smooth, round cheek with the long lashes.

"But I dae care, Loui," said Giles, coming near her and bending down.

She was so small and he was so big. The next thing that happened, while the pigeons cooed madly, was that Loui's head rested against Giles's coarse, rough checked jacket, and that his arm was round her waist.

"I niver thocht on anything like this," said Giles, after a little, with genuine astonishment. "Did ye, Loui?"

"Na," said Loui.

She had not expected it to come so soon, and she was taken by surprise. His force dominated her, and she was quite satisfied when Giles explained to her, with a new-born importance, that she was engaged to him now "however folks might objec'."

The engagement might have lingered indeterminately, but an attack of jealousy on Giles's part brought matters to a conclusion.

It was 'Hallow E'en," and Giles and Loui and Sandy, and every one, young and old, kept it in good old Scotch fashion. The night of "all the Saints" was not a night to be lightly passed over. It was only then that a great deal of the wonderful borderland 'twixt dull reality and eventful possibility might be entered. Giles and Loui came in for an immense amount of chaff. In the dim uncertainty of the future, as foretold by the "Kail Kastocks" and such proofs, they alone stood on the high and dry ground of surety. Loui was in the height of enjoyment.

"A body niver kens what may happen," she said to Giles, who brusquely told her there was no need to try her fortune. "There," she said triumphantly, a few minutes after. She had been sitting in front of a looking glass in the dim light of an empty room, waiting for the prophetic vision to appear, and first Giles and then Sandy had passed behind her. "There, Giles," she said. "There were twa passed. Mebbe——" but Giles got suddenly angry. It was an outbreak against Sandy more than love for Loui.

"What did ye mean, Sandy, by passin' ahint her? She's mine, I tell ye, mine and naebody else's."

Sandy stared at him in astonishment.

"There's mair than you wad be glad to hae her, lad," said an old farmer, who was sitting by the fire at one end of the large farm kitchen. "Dinna' grudge them their chance."

Unfortunately Loui laughed.

"I'm gaun to see ye hame noo, Loui!"

said Giles severely. "There's been enough o' this bairn's play."

They were all back in the long kitchen with the heavy rafters and the big open fireplace. Giles and Loui were standing in the partial gloom at one end; the others had grouped themselves near the fire, watching curiously.

"I winna' gang wi' ye, Giles," said Loui, who had no desire to leave the scene which was affording her exquisite amusement.

"And I say ye sall!" said Giles.

"She winna'!" said a voice from the group.

"I'm nae sae sure," said another.

Loui heard it all. Giles heard and saw nothing but her.

"If ye dinna' gang wi' me the noo," he said, "I hae done wi' ye. Ye can tak any one else ye like."

Loui was frightened.

"I'll gang," she said quickly and sullenly.

Giles sighed with relief. The sigh was prompted by his dogged determination to be first or nowhere.

"Guid night!" said Loui to the group. She left Sandy to the end. "Guid nicht, Sandy!" she said meekly, without looking at him.

"I'll see ye hame," said Sandy, losing his head suddenly. "Just aince mair for auld sake's sake."

Giles literally shoved Loui out of the house and ran her along, Loui keeping up an undercurrent of grumbling all the way.

This incident determined Giles to have the marriage immediately; and so by Christmas it took place. Loui was pleased and happy enough at first. She liked sitting up in the little best room and receiving her visitors.

"You are a lucky woman," said the Dominie, who came to call.

Loui smiled. It was a sweet smile, but it irritated the Dominie; he did not know why.

"Ay," he repeated, "there is a deal of good in Giles, and there's more'n him might be brought out with judicious treatment." Loui stared. "It all depends," added the Dominie, and he looked at her hardly. Then he sighed, got up, and said "Good-bye" abruptly.

"Yon's a queer man," said Loui to her husband that evening. They were sitting in the kitchen end by that time. "The Dominie; I dinna' ken what he was talking about."

"I ken," said Giles, amused. "He just rins on and on, and half the time folk diana' ken what he's haverin' aboot. He diana' care."

"That fatal mistake of marriage!" said the Dominie, as he thought over his call. "She's not equal to Giles. She's not capable of understanding a man like that. He will find out her emptiness soon, and then," the Dominie paused, "he'll go straight to the dogs. He never did anything in a half and half way."

The Dominie was wrong. Giles passed from a complacent lover to a most ardent admirer. It was a pity. If he had taken Loui as she was, they would have had an uneventful happy enough life. Giles fell in love with his wife, and he worried and perplexed her by the very depth of his love. "Loui," he said one afternoon, coming into the kitchen where she sat straining her eyes by the window, trimming a hat, "Loui, I canna' keep oot o' your sight; I canna' rechly believe ye're here, my verra ain."

"It's gloamin'," said Loui practically, "and if ye dinna' mak' haste, ye winna hae time to gang my messages afore dark."

At first Giles laughed at these practical replies to his love-making. Then as they got more pettish, and Loui's tone got sharper, he began to think.

"Dinna' ye love me noo?" he asked one day wistfully.

He had a tactless way of asking her this sort of question at inopportune times.

"Of coorse I love ye," said Loui, "but ye need na' gang dinning it in my ears a' the time. I'd niver get ony wark dene if I stoppit to hearken to a' your talk."

"I canna' help it," said Giles simply. "You see, I niver looded ony ane afore, and it's fair impossible nae to lat ye ken."

One day Loui's patience gave out. Giles had wandered in and out of the house all the day.

"Will ye gang oot o' the hoose?" she snapped at last. "I'd think shame to stan' and watch your wife dae a' the wark, and ye daeing naething a' va."

"What can I dae, Loui?" he asked humbly.

"Dae!" she repeated in a high-pitched voice. "Dae onything. Ye're ready enough wi' fine words, but it's little ye dae."

"Dod' ye're richt, Loui," said her husband, still with meekness. "Ye see, wif my gran'feyther leaving me his savings there's niver was ony ado to wark to pay

the rent. I niver thoct there was sae muckle wark possible in this bit of a hoose till ye cam'."

He said it with honest admiration for his wife's powers.

"And I wark a' day and every day, while ye stan' and look on. A fine hoose ye'd hae if I did the same, and it's near impossible wi' a man in to clean, and bake, and wash."

"Would you like me oot o' your wye?"

His face was white and set, but Loui was not quick at reading signs.

"Ay, there's sense in that," she said, "if ye can find aught tae dae."

Giles went out and sat on the stone dyke near the house. He felt he had had rather a shock, though in the main Loui was right. He thought, rather grimly, it would never have entered his head to ask Loui to get out of his sight. After that Giles set to work to make the little homestead more of a "place." There were not great possibilities in it, but Giles had never attempted any improvements. By degrees the healthy work interested him; then he developed an inventive turn. Loui had no longer cause of complaint against him for his idleness. He loved her as much as ever, but he repressed himself, and did not "worry" her with his feelings.

"Women hae sic a curious wye o' hidin' their thochts," he meditated one evening. "Ye never ken wha' ye are. I hae gien up trying to unnerstan' them."

He said it complacently. One great charm Loui had for him was her impenetrable reserve. He never realised that what baffled him was the incapacity of a superficial nature, and not the feminine reserve with which he credited her.

The next step Giles took was in accordance with the Dominie's wish, but it helped to widen the breach that all unconsciously was growing between Loui and himself.

"Read, Giles," said the Dominie; "you'll find compensations."

Giles did not know for what, but he took the advice. Loui had taken to running across to her mother's or a neighbour's in the evening, while Giles buried himself in books of travel which some instinct led the Dominie to lend him. It did not make him restless, but it did broaden his views. Loui began, on the other hand, to despise the tiny cottage with its small windows and the trim little garden.

"Sandy says he would na' ask ony one to be his wife till he could keep a sairvant,"

she said one day. She said it in an off-hand tone, but she meant it to give him a thrust.

He looked up from his book.

"Dis he?" he asked absently, and went back to his reading.

Loui was annoyed. She did not know what she wanted, but Giles's presence had come to be a sort of tacit rebuke. He worked hard; he was fond of the cottage, of books, of the Dominie, and herself. It was all different with her. She had got tired of the cottage, of everything. Even her love for Giles was of the feeblest. She wanted more tangibility in her life—new dresses, excitements. She missed the variety of her girlish life. Even thick-skinned Giles began dimly to wonder what he had done to make her discontented. One Sunday evening after this idea had dawned upon him, he spoke to her gravely. Loui had pettishly refused to walk with him. She was going to her mother's, she said, and "she wisna' seekin' him wi' her." He looked at her solemnly, and said:

"Loui, hiv ye aught against me?"

Some devil stirred up the pettiness of her mind. She pouted and said nothing.

"Loui, answer me this meenit," said Giles, going white and speaking more roughly than he knew.

Then the storm burst. Tears, reproaches, protestations of her disgust at things in general and particular, all the small strength of her nature came to the front. Giles heard it all silently.

"Ye hae a lot to say, Loui," he said simply when she had worn herself out.

Old sayings of the Dominie's came before him—sayings about marriage, and life—and through it all Giles wondered where the Dominie had got his experiences. "He was never mairrit," he said to himself, unconscious of sarcasm. All the same, Giles never blamed his wife. He had an arrogance in his conceit, but he had a grand humility if he thought he was in the wrong. Not once did he doubt this time that he was in the wrong; irrevocably, irretrievably in the wrong in having married her. "I wisna' worthy o' her," he said sadly.

Perhaps it was as well for his moral nature that he took it in this light. And if there was humour in the idea, Giles never found it out, and no one else knew of it. After that, as an inevitable result, things were wretched. Loui kept up her aggrieved rôle. She was really happy putting her little pins into him. He took them as his due.

"Is there no wye o' putting things astra'cht atween us?" he asked her wistfully. But he got no satisfaction. An idea took possession of him. Gradually he hammered it into a scheme. Things could not right as matters stood—that was clear. Giles was human, but he was simple. The Dominie's advice, the Dominie's books all pointed to a wider sphere. Perhaps if he followed out what he had learned from both he might win his way to name or fortune. This would buy Loui's love; he would come back to raise her. He did not confide his scheme in any one. He felt he could not bear the questions, the astonishment, above all the leave-takings. He knew he could not disguise the reason of his going. He did not want any one to know the misery that had come into his life. The sacrifice was pretty hard. His end in view alone enabled him to carry it through.

"Giles gone, without saying a word? How very extraordinary!" said the Dominie.

Loui was sitting in the parlour with a clean handkerchief beside her, and the blind down, and all visible signs of decent grief apparent. She said nothing. There was nothing to be gained by speaking. Recriminations against the absent did no good. She had had her say, and she was rather frightened by the result.

"Had you—forgive my asking you—had you and Giles had words?" said the Dominie.

"A'boddy has words at times," said Loui; "but he was gey kind as a rule."

This shifted the blame to Giles, but was so far true.

"Of course," said the Dominie hastily. "But—well, there's no use wondering. He's left you money, you say?"

"Ob, ay!" said Loui. "And paid the rent," she added magnanimously. She wiped her eyes with the handkerchief; but she did not unfold it. She expected many more visitors. There were wine and biscuits ready on the table for these condolence visitors; for, as far as any one knew, she might be in very deed a "widow woman." The Dominie's visit was the most unsatisfactory to Loui. All his interest seemed centred in the absent Giles, not her; while his show of affection for him was simply senseless.

"He has found his love for her dead, crushed by her insanity. I wonder if this move is on my shoulders? I always

wanted him to go off, but not after this woman came into the question." So mused the Dominie; and he missed Giles more than he cared to acknowledge.

Two years later a Scotchman lay dying in a hospital ward in Cape Colony. He was white and emaciated; hardly any traces of the old strong, prominent characteristics were left. It was Giles. He was wandering, and knew and saw nothing of anything around him. At the foot of his bed stood the Sister of the ward and the Chaplain. They were looking sadly at him, for the doctor had said there was no hope.

"Splendid fellow!" said the Chaplain softly. "I hear he has worked extraordinarily hard since he came, and straight as a die in his life. He was bound to have got on."

"It seems hard," said the Sister softly too, with a far-away, misty look in her eyes. She was always facing this problem.

"Faster!" said the feeble tones of the sick man they were watching, who, all unconscious of them, was far away, back into epochs of his life. "Faster! It's 'Weel may the keel row.' Dinna stop it, I tell ye."

"Extraordinary," murmured the Chaplain with a pained look. He was young and very High Church. He nervously fingered a silver cross which hung from his black watch-chain. "These Scotchmen have, I regret to say it, very little religious instinct about them. Their cult seems to me to be their country. Listen to that man; in his last moments he is haunted by one of their monotonous Scotch airs. It is not even one of the pathetic ones."

"Play it, I tell ye. 'Weel may——' I canna' hear it. They've stoppit and I'm aae near dane."

"I expect we don't quite understand it," said the Sister very gently. She was very High, too, but she was older than the Chaplain, and her sympathies had learnt to be elastic. "They've stopped playing it," she said clearly, stepping up to the bedside.

"The wind's sighing in the trees, and the cushat does——" But Giles's weary voice failed him.

The Sister made way for the Chaplain, who prayed for the passing soul with all the fervour of his warm, earnest nature. Giles came to his senses before the end came.

"Tell her I lo'd her," he said. "That's why I left. She'll ken."

Then he died.

The Chaplain made all enquiries about him; but all he gathered he embodied in a notice which he sent to the Scotch papers. The Dominie came upon it in his "weekly" as he sat reading one evening:

"At the Fever Hospital, Cape Town, of fever, September sixteenth, Giles ——, of Longton, ——shire, Scotland, N.B."

"That's Giles," said the Dominie deliberately. He folded up the paper and looked through his spectacles till he could not see; but he said nothing at first. He only felt that with Giles's death there was nothing left. "If the boy had only lived," said the Dominie, taking off his spectacles. He referred to the little boy who had come into the world some time after Giles's departure. The baby had only lived three short months; but the Dominie had mapped out a future for him, as he had done for his father before. "His boy," he repeated dreamily. "Now there is no one."

The Dominie lost most of his old enthusiasm after that. He never wrote to make enquiries about Giles's death, though the Chaplain was waiting for letters at the other side.

"I don't blame him for leaving yon wife," said the Dominie vehemently; "but I don't want to learn anything that would shake my faith in the lad."

The Dominie had theorised over Giles all his life, and he preferred his early theories to his late ones.

Loui waited a year. Then she married Sandy. It was universally felt that this showed a compensating providence that it was comforting to acknowledge.

It was only the Dominie who could never be brought to see that Loui merited any recompense for Giles's desertion.

WINTER LIFE IN COPENHAGEN.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

BUT it is really time to revert from Denmark's monarch to the dinner-table. I had strolled myself into a Gargantuan appetite. Besides, I wished to thaw the icicles off my moustache, which had of late become impudently assertive. In this mood I espied an engaging window littered with rigid hares, ptarmigan, chickens, and much else, and a placard announcing dinners within at a crown a head.

Now, a Danish crown is only thirteence halfpenny in English money. A table d'hôte dinner in a high-class street of a European capital for the price of a porous

plaster seemed to me so remarkable that I straightway entered the house, made my bow to the lady of a certain age at the inner counter, and buttonholed a waiter. By the way, one must be polite in Denmark. It is a bore, I admit, to lift one's hat whenever one enters a shop—perhaps merely to buy a halfpenny match-box—and especially if one is bald as a marble mantelpiece. But it is expected from one. Practice soon makes the custom endurable, though, I believe, never congenial to the Briton, and so in two or three days I could go through a bout of hat-raising with any one, from a schoolboy to a station-master, and that without more than a few internal adjurations to myself not to be such a fool as to mind feeling a bit stiff in the ceremony. It makes all the difference sometimes whether you behave as a Dane in this particular or as an indurated cockney. There is no comparison between the interest you excite in the people themselves in the respective cases.

Here is the bill of fare of my thirteenth halfpenny dinner: Cabbage soup, veal cutlets, the wing of a chicken, with jam, apple fritters, and coffee. The cooking was not altogether after the English fashion; but that was not to be expected. I do not like jam and chicken together. Still, it was easy to eat the chicken and neglect the jam. And, after all, it is much that the meal was served in a cleanly way, with due courtesy from a gentleman in swallow tails, who seemed as enchanted as a Scandinavian can be with a gratuity of three halfpence. Two or three unobtrusive ladies stole in, and made the same kind of meal, and about as many gentlemen. Others preferred a dinner at thirteen twentieths of a crown, or rather less than eightpence. They met with the same civility, and were not inordinately mulcted in the bill of fare.

I left the place with my cigar, feeling considerable respect for Copenhagen—a respect that, after becoming intimate with Thorvaldsen, has by no means diminished either in kind or quantity.

For my coffee I went forthwith to the seat of fashion and, as some think, extravagance—the *Hôtel d'Angleterre*, the first hotel in Denmark.

Here I read the papers and chuckled over the increased hardships of those who crossed the Great Belt after our passage. What did I care if the frost set in so as to cut all except over-ice communication? I, at any rate, had reached port.

It was rather dull in this gaudy coffee-hall. The frost glare was on the windows, so that I could not, as at Venice and elsewhere, see the ebb and flow of human life outside while trifling with my spoon. Of the half-dozen or so gentlemen who entered after me, none were notable as types of anything in particular. There was the inevitable Anglomaniac youth, in high collar, with gaiters to his ankles, who smoked a downright briar instead of his country's cigars. A bull-dog slunk at his heels, and peered forth later to be fed with sugar. This young gentlemen drank soda and brandy. It is not such a popular beverage with us as it used to be. Even our novelists have got to substituting for it a whiskey and seltzer. But it was rather droll to see this youngster take it as something "quite up to date, don't you know."

Still, though dull, the café helped me very passably on towards the evening. Then, with the glow of electricity on the square outside the hotel, and on the inner courtyard commanded by my bedroom, I dressed for the royal theatre, which was to present the world with something entertaining that night, said the hotel porter, a gentleman who may generally be relied upon to know everything within the town's orbit.

I was, however, too sleepy to thoroughly appreciate the piece, and also too ignorant. It was a comedy of a high order, and the acting was in keeping with it. I only understood of it certain ejaculatory phrases used by the gentlemen in impatient moments, and certain tender words which sound never more sweet than from woman's lips. It contented me nevertheless.

In the intervals I had adequate opportunity to see something of Copenhagen's youth and beauty. I was disappointed. The young ladies in evening dress were not half so piquant as in furs in the open with the frost kissing their cheeks. Besides, I grieve to say, many of them wore a most unbecoming kind of pigtail, which gave emphasis to ears naturally above the common size. As for their mammas, well, they were only their daughters microscopically treated.

Afterwards I hinted to some one that I had really expected better things of the royal theatre on this count.

"Oh, but," said my companion, "they are so amiable that they seem beautiful to us."

There is much in such a plea. Moreover, these girls did look amiable. But how is

a stranger to know if looks and reality concur!

I retired to bed sufficiently satisfied with my first day in Copenhagen.

The second day in Copenhagen and the third and successive days were none too much to give to Thorvaldsen. What would the town be without the heritage of his genius?

Doubtless the classic exterior of his museum harmonises well with the classic character of his works and the mind which begot the works. But Denmark itself does not seem quite to suit these exquisite marbles in the nude any more than it treats with fit regard the historical frescoes which adorn—or rather once adorned—the outer walls of the shrine which guards the marbles. It is no fault of the Danes themselves that this is so. They worship reverently at Thorvaldsen's feet, and avow him unique. It was the fervour of their veneration that led them to paint the walls of this temple of ideals with scenes out of Thorvaldsen's life career. The frescoes would have lived passably well in Genoa or the south, generally assuming that the pigments themselves were judiciously chosen. But half a century has more than sufficed in the north to blear and disfigure them, so that a cynic has ample excuse to mock alike them and their initiators.

No matter. Heedless of the incongruity of the frescoes and snow and frost in close conjunction, I entered the solemn building, which is temple and tomb in one, prepared to do homage with any one to the greatest Dane of the century.

It was another biting day. News had come in the morning that it was a toss up whether or not the mail ice-boat would succeed in cutting its passage across the Sound to Sweden. Certain enterprising Swedes had already come to Copenhagen from Malmö afoot. In fact, a day more opposed to commonplace tourist energies could scarcely be conceived. I fully expected to have the museum to myself.

For a while, indeed, it was so, if I may except the uniformed custodians who perambulated the cold corridors in overcoats, hawked, and rubbed their hands together, and carried noses of a cruelly suggestive hue. They are gentlemen past the prime of life, and therefore unlikely to be in thrall to overpowering enthusiasms of any kind. All the same, there was something genuine about the gesture with which the first of these old fellows pointed out to

me the contents of the first of the little cabinet chambers, each of which holds one of Thorvaldsen's chef d'œuvre. But I could not abide the idea of being personally conducted through such a sanctuary. I therefore pleaded profound ignorance of colloquial Danish, bowed the worthy clerone into the background, and went my way. Such treasures as Thorvaldsen's marbles must be well guarded. I thought it no particular hardship afterwards if whenever I looked away from a statue I found a custodian's eyes upon me. People who can find it in them to score their initials and ribald phrases on cathedral altars would not mind defiling Thorvaldsen's Graces, or his Amor and Psyche, in like manner. To do the Danes justice, however, it must be said that they do not thus profane their wonderful museum.

It is impossible in a mere article even to hint categorically at the marvels done by Thorvaldsen in his life of some three score years and ten. The Copenhagen museum shows five or six hundred of them, great and small, statues, groups, busts, and reliefs. The mind stumbles and then suffocates in an attempt to enjoy and appraise them in one brief term of three or four hours. In the very first cabinet the Ganymedes filling and offering the cup seem surpassingly fine. But they are forgotten in the exquisite grace of the female figures of other cabinets. His Jason makes as strong an impression as anything of the kind in the Vatican, and the same may be said of his Adonis. It is a pity that we in England have little or nothing in colossal statuary that would bear comparison with his Poniatowski or his Gutenberg. It was cold work looking at these gigantic achievements in a hall that had not yet felt the influence of the heating apparatus throughout the museum. Yet somehow the mere sight of them kept the blood warm. It was as if the apostrophes of admiration which claimed to be uttered and were yet suppressed from lack of auditors ran through the body in an electric current. Genius can inspire and exalt; it may surely, also, play the meaner part of stove or palette.

To my mind, great as are Thorvaldsen's statues, his reliefs are even greater. There is sublimity in the former, but more sentiment, sweetness, and withal truth to nature in the latter. Take, for example, the relief of "Night with her Children, Sleep and Death." No poet on such a subject could be more expressive than

Thorvaldsen with his chisel. Mark the owl drifting in the ether behind the angelic figure bearing the infant effigies with eyes fast closed. The mind plunges into drowsy reverie before this most eloquent of poems in marble. Art could not more entirely fulfil its function of suspending the individuality of the spectator and, for the time, saturating him with ideality. The "Shepherdess with a Nest of Amorines," or little Cupids, works differently upon the beholder, but with the like success. The reliefs of the four seasons and ages of men—flowers, love, fruit, and decadence—produce an effect akin to that ascribed to the early stages of death by drowning. Looking at them one feels them as an epitome of life; tender, intoxicating, and melancholy as the old man himself, who huddles over the brazier his fast-chilling dust. From these it is good again to turn to the reliefs of Hylas and the Water Nymphs, with their fervour of strong, lusty life in the zenith of its enjoyment. There is a certain voluptuousness in these two treatments of the same subject; but, though it kindles the blood, it does not amount to sensuality. The graceful curves and outlines of the bodies of the nymphs satisfy; they need not excite.

From these cabinets of gems in marble, I passed suddenly into the hall which holds Thorvaldsen's Christ and the Apostles—gigantically treated. Here one sees the sculptor at his loftiest pitch. I prefer to say nothing more about these astounding figures—save that all the Apostles are as nothing to the Christ who controls them. The Salvation Army and revivalists in general are believed to have done laudable work in reawakening among the poorer classes the instinct of religion which had become torpid in them. I do not feel that I exaggerate when I say that it seems to me that Thorvaldsen's Christ might serve the same purpose for rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated alike, if it could be led through the civilised world and exhibited with due ceremony in metropolises and market-places.

Thorvaldsen lies buried in the courtyard of the museum; the doors letting upon the granite tombstone open opposite the chamber of the Christ and Apostles. No man has a more majestic sepulchre. The errors of the frescoing to these inner walls, as well as the outer, and the pent nature of the surroundings to the bay-crowned tomb are as nothing to the glory shed upon his dust by its proximity to the most

elevating and refining work in marble the world can show. Thorvaldsen's Christ is a cult in itself.

The Church of our Lady, which contains the marble of which the Christ and the Apostles in the museum were the models, is interesting only for its association with Thorvaldsen. The obliging old sacristan who has charge of the church will not be satisfied unless you affect or show a certain amount of stupefaction before the monstrous marbles. Really, however, after the museum casts, they do not quite answer expectation. Even the Christ, keeping tender watch and ward, with outstretched arms, in the east end, does not please like the Christ in the museum. The words "Come to Me" on the pedestal are more touching as emanations from Thorvaldsen's Christ.

After this admirable collection—worth journeying from Fiji to behold—the museum of Northern Antiquities is the thing best worth seeing in the capital. You must, at the outset, though, be patient with the rather tiresome collection of flints which fills the first three or four rooms. A very profound antiquary may deduce much of human interest from these rows of knives and spear and arrow heads in variegated stone. But to the common man, whose imagination is in abeyance, they are not inspiring.

From the flints, however, we soon pass to the chambers illustrative of human progress in the north. One feels better pleased with works of iron and bronze than with those of mere stone. Gold and silver also appear and touch other chords of interest. One of the most recent of these finds of precious metal is a superb bowl of hammered silver, with grotesque hunting scenes in relief. This treasure, about a yard in diameter, was unearthed in 1891 in the Galborg province. A multitude of gold rings and fibulae also tell of the wealth of the old Danes as well as of the pleasant "finds" that may yet be discovered at any moment among the great bogs and heather land of mid-Jutland and Bornholm.

The arrangement of these rooms is admirable. Thus one passes by one chamber after another; from the periods that may be termed prehistoric to the period of early Christianity with its abortive saints in wood, and thence to the later Middle Ages when men made it the labour of love of a lifetime to carve a single altar-piece of ivory. Some of the ecclesiastical work

from Husum—alas! now German territory—is most notable. And from these wonders in silver and copper-gilt one passes again to an era of huge flagons, crossbows, and coats of mail. A more complete and delectable lesson in national development could not well be had than this of the Danish national museum. It seems a pity that our own vast treasures in Great Russell Street cannot be rearranged more instructively. At present the British Museum is as appalling to the stranger as its wealth is incalculable.

But enough of museums and collections. After Thorvaldsen and the national show, the lesser sights of Copenhagen within walls may reasonably be neglected.

As a town, Copenhagen has few individual features. The few that it has I viewed one morning from the roof of the Round Tower which rises in its midst. I did not view them unmoved, for it was snowing at the time, and no one had thought of trundling wheelbarrows up the inclined staircase for the transference of the accumulation of snow on the summit to a lower level. I looked briefly at the confused area of housetops, church spires, telegraph and telephone wires, at the dark trees of the parklands, and the white Baltic; then shivered and retraced my steps. The tower is barely one hundred and twenty feet high, but Copenhagen is so flat a town that at this altitude it seems wholly discoverable. There is nothing at all remarkable in the fact that the Russian Empress Catherine, in 1716, drove a coach and four up to the top of this tower. Certainly the gradient is unusually steep, and no well-bred horse would like the circuitous motion needful to ascend spirally. But the thoroughfare is wide and solid enough, even for an Empress of Russia.

There is a church, in the poorer part of Copenhagen with a staircase much better adapted to confer a thrill. This church—Our Saviour's—with a spire nearly three hundred feet high, may be ascended externally to the ball which crowns it. The steps are firm, but unless you have a steady head you may grow very dizzy ere you touch the topmost of them.

From these various vantage points the eye almost involuntarily turns to the Baltic more than anywhere else. In summer the water-way gives life and beauty to the place. Moreover, you may see Sweden beyond. In winter, with hard frost, the scene is of course totally different. Instead of a lively coming and going of great ships and

sails, like fleeces on the blue water, all, or nearly all, is rigid. You hear the hammer, hammer, hammer from the Royal Dockyard, and you see the vapour eddying lazily from the funnels of a hundred steamboats. But nothing is in motion on the blue water, which is not blue at all, but white—just a vast snow-clad field, stretching from Denmark to Sweden.

I amused myself two or three times in the afternoon by strolling down to the Custom House, and walking a mile or more out to sea, to watch the blood-red winter's sun sink in the west behind Copenhagen's thin but positive canopy of smoke. It was not smooth walking at all. The ice-boats had fought against the frost as long as possible, and tumbled the blocks edgewise and one upon another, and the snow had come and more than half hid these perilous surfaces. But though rough, I could not even with a hammer have broken through into the nether water. Here and there was a track of bloodstains. Blood never looks redder than when interjected upon snow. Less careful pedestrians than myself had probably hurt themselves on these ice-edges.

It was odd thus to stumble up to the hull of first one barque and then another, stuck in the ice and separated from each other by longish reaches, like plums in a poor cake. The "Jaue Clark," of Sunderland, lay a gunshot from the "Olsen," of Christiansand, and an American wheat-ship was bound a little farther off. The last of these had clearly made frantic efforts to release herself. She was girdled by a cumber of floss—a formidable "cheval de frise" for the pedestrian. But neither the hot water from her boilers nor the circular trips of the ice-boat had been able to cut her free; and so at last she had resigned herself to her fate. Her sides, like those of the other captives, were draped with icicles and ice-sheathing, not all of which was good to look upon.

The scene on the Custom House quay on any of these afternoons was suggestive of the hardships that attend an unusually severe winter in the north. Hundreds of dock and other semi-marine labourers were here assembled in knots, stamping their feet and bustling their arms like cockney cabmen. Periodically an official would appear and pin a fresh telegram to the notice-board outside. This told of yet another Danish port rendered inaccessible by ice. The unemployed would shuffle towards it, read it, comment on it, laugh

a little constrainedly as they looked in each other's faces, and then recur to the waterside to gaze at the motionless ships and the huge cubes of ice cut from the sea, as indications of the tremendous force a thaw would have to bring upon the land and sea ere things could assume their normal course on the quays. They were neither noisy or aggressive, these unemployed of Copenhagen. But they did not look very happy, poor fellows! Their wives and families in the new model lodging-houses of the north of the town—the Nybøden—were doubtless suffering privations quite equal to their own associated grievances.

After a week I felt that I knew as much of Copenhagen as was necessary to pass a fairly comprehensive Civil Service examination on the subject. To be sure, I had not grovelled in its slums, nor even soiled my senses in its "fast" midnight resorts. Of the latter, one especial hive of the dissolute was mentioned as by no means to be neglected by the man who sought to plumb the depths as well as scale the heights of life in the Danish capital. It is a well-known café in a principal street—a place of chartered libertinism. If you enter it before the witching hour you do not see beneath the epidermis of respectability, which then still holds over it, though loosening. An hour or two hours later its revels are at their zenith.

Copenhagen is not a very "wild" town; but neither is it a model place to please New England Puritans, with a craze for villages the inhabitants of which are to live up to the standard of human perfectibility. One night I went to a theatre to see a play called "The Magdalene." It was a poor piece of work, this play. But its author had the audacity in it to depict a woman of a certain class as his heroine, and to render the incidents of her sorry career—scene, Copenhagen—with merciless fidelity. What was the result? Night after night this theatre was packed to the hindermost seat of its "parterre." An excited audience of old men and women, young men and women, and children yet years off their teens, gloated over this truthful display of one of the unsightly sores of modern metropolitan existence.

This sort of thing apart, Copenhagen, even in winter, is a pleasant place to a man with skates in his portmanteau, and a certain indifference to the thermometer. I had little time for social festivities, but I enjoyed the harmonious echo of not a

few of them as I lay abed in my apartment of the "Angleterre," and listened to the tread of feet and the harps and violins of the nether ball-room. Several marriages "de bon ton" were arranged formally in these state rooms of the hotel during my stay. The parents and relatives and others concerned drove up ceremoniously, were still more ceremoniously ushered into the chamber, where, seated at a long table, they put all in train for the final proceeding. And afterwards they danced until the small hours, when I might chance to wake drowsily to listen to the dulled sound of their horses' feet on the fresh-fallen snow outside the courtyard.

There may not be much poetic charm about life in Copenhagen, any more than there is about life in London or New York. But there is human interest wherever there are human beings, and here there are, I suppose, about three hundred thousand of these.

It is a downright, fervid, flesh and blood, real town, with a glamour of unique ideality upon it—the latter due entirely to Thorvaldsen. Without Thorvaldsen it might tend painfully towards unmitigated grossness.

MY COUSIN COLAS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

I DID not feel very happy or comfortable in my mind after Colas's departure. My uncle's loud lamentations sounded to me like reproaches, and instead of our secret drawing me nearer to Clémence, it seemed rather to make a gap between us.

"It is a matter I am never going to speak of to any one," she said, the first and only time I alluded to it; "we did nothing which we need feel to be really wrong. You had best forget that you narrowly escaped a life you dreaded."

But it was not easy to forget, the more so as I saw that something weighed her spirits down too. Others noticed a change in her besides myself.

"I believe," said Colas's mother, "that Clémence Servais is pining after our boy. We wanted him to say something to her before he went away, but he would not. Never mind, when he comes for his Christmas leave we will have the matter arranged."

But in Colas's letters, which grew always shorter and rarer, he made no mention of leave; and a cold, cheerless Christmas

came and went, and Clémence grew visibly paler and thinner.

"It is the weather," she would say, if any one remarked on it; "this is the coldest winter I have ever known."

She was right, the weather was exceptionally bitter; and after the New Year the dark waters of the Semois, swollen by the rains, began to be flecked with white jagged blocks of ice, which collected above the weir and at every place where they met with a barrier in the shallow river bed.

I still went on with some pretence of lessons with Monsieur le Doyen, but now, when I felt that my chance with Clémence had sunk so low, I had but little heart in the matter. Now and then I got a lecture from my teacher on my indifference to what he called the salt of life. A grain of encouragement from Clémence was all the salt I wanted for my life; and I longed to tell him so, but what was the use? It was, indeed, not only the frost which I found hard that winter.

We sat thus one evening—the old priest in his arm-chair, and Clémence bending silently over her work, while I read lamely from the history of Belgium, when a quick step stopped outside the door, and some one knocked.

"Come in!" cried Monsieur le Doyen. "Come in, and don't let the cold in with you."

The door opened and let in—so much to our surprise that we hardly recognised him—my cousin Colas.

"Mon fils!" exclaimed the old man, while Clémence, her face radiant with joy, sprang from her seat. "Mon fils, why did you not give us the pleasure of expecting you and preparing for you?"

But Colas's only response to this hearty greeting was to hold out his hand in silence with a troubled look on his face.

"You are perished with cold," went on Monsieur le Doyen, when they had shaken hands. "Come and sit by the fire, and tell us when you arrived and how long leave you have."

"I have this moment reached Frahan, mon père," replied Colas in a constrained tone, "and my leave is only for twenty-four hours." Then, as Clémence made a little exclamation of surprise, he went on: "My leave is not for pleasure, I may as well tell you that at once, and I am come straight to you, Monsieur le Doyen, because I can speak to you with less difficulty than I could to my father. You have never been hard on me yet."

"I understand," said the old priest slowly; "you have got yourself into some scrapes." My cousin nodded his head. "Ah, mon fils," he went on sadly, "and what has become of that exemplary soldier we used to hear so much about?"

"Do not upbraid him, mon oncle," said Clémence quickly, "before you know what his trouble is. He has come to us—to you—because—because——"

"I am not upbraiding him," was the answer. "Go on, Colas."

Then Colas told us a terrible tale of how he had fallen into bad company in his regiment, and had yielded to all sorts of temptations; how, worst of all, he had tried to regain the money he had squandered by gambling; how sometimes he had won, which had taken away his last jot of caution, and how at last, after a persistent run of bad luck, he had borrowed money from a cantinière of another regiment to clear himself with his comrades; how she had grown impatient for repayment, and had finally gone to his sergeant, who had reported him; how, luckily, the Captain was a kind-hearted man, whereby he had obtained twenty-four hours' leave to go home and get the necessary sum.

"He proposed I should do so," concluded Colas, "and I accepted the offer; but I knew it would be of no use to go to my father. If he had the money he would never give it me for such a purpose. But I thought that you, Monsieur le Doyen, who have always been so good to me, would have pity on me. I do not know what will happen if I go back without the money. I suppose it will be some terrible disgrace. It is five hundred francs, mon père, five hundred francs! and I will honestly pay you back some day, if you will stand between me and ruin now."

The old man's kindly face had clouded over as he listened to Colas's tale.

"Colas," he said severely, "what faith can you expect me to place in your promises after those you have already treated so lightly?"

Colas looked at Clémence—he evidently expected her to plead his cause; I scarcely thought she would dare; but I was wrong. She rose from her seat, and going to her uncle's aide, took his hand and kissed it softly. He drew it gently from her.

"Yes, ma fille, yes, ma fille," he said, "I know all that, but five hundred francs is a large sum of money."

"It must seem even larger to Colas," she replied, "than it does to you."

He did not answer, but when he had looked into her upturned face, he got up and went into the adjoining room. In a few minutes he returned with a roll of notes in his hand.

"My pension came a few days ago," he said simply, "otherwise I could not have given it to you. I do not know if I am acting wisely. No, no, do not thank me; word gratitude is not what I want from you now."

"You are right, Monsieur le Doyen," said Colas humbly, "my words can have no weight with you; but you shall see, indeed you shall. I will write and tell you how it all ends. God bless you!"

Then he held out his hand to say good-bye.

"Au revoir, monsieur," he said, "au revoir. I shall catch the night mail from Paliseul and be in Brussels before daybreak to-morrow."

"But, Colas," I exclaimed, "are you not going to see your parents?"

"Yes," added Monsieur le Doyen. "Why should you travel all night for the sake of being in Brussels so early? When does your leave expire?"

"At noon to-morrow," replied Colas, "but I had rather go back to-night; and how could I go to my parents? What could I say to them? I would rather they did not know of my coming even."

"Well," I said, "if you are determined to go, I will walk with you as far as Roehaut Church."

"No, no," he said sharply. "I had rather you did no such thing. Good-bye all."

We went with him to the door, and in spite of the cold stood watching him. A little snow was falling; we could see his tall figure plainly in the whiteness. He was the only moving thing in the wintry night—every one else was safe at home.

"What is he going down that way for?" I exclaimed, as my cousin turned to the left in the meadow, instead of to the right towards the footbridge.

"Why, don't you see?" said Clémence, "he will cross the river at the weir on the ice, and so he will avoid the risk of meeting any one on the path. He knows what he is doing."

That apparently was his intention. We stood watching him till he reached the opposite bank of the Semois, and then against the dark background of the rocks he had to climb we lost sight of him.

"He will get to the high-road more quickly that way than if he had gone

round the path," said Clémence, as we went in.

The old priest sighed heavily.

"It's a sad pity," he said softly. "A sad pity."

I looked at Clémence. I felt as guilty as if I had been the one who had wasted my substance and clogged myself with debt. I wondered if she, too, were touched with remorse; but she met my glance almost defiantly, as if she dared me to regret the past—even in thought.

The next morning the river was ice-bound, and a thin veil of snow lay over everything. The weatherwise prophesied that we were only at the beginning of what we had to endure, and the old men raked up memories of the famous frosts of bygone times.

Monsieur le Doyen tried hard to persuade himself that it was on account of some complication arising from the severity of the weather that Colas's promised letter did not arrive at the earliest possible opportunity. Then he began to have misgivings; but the worst that he imagined fell short of the truth, as we learnt it only too soon.

News of Colas came a few days after his secret visit. It was brought by a corporal of the Guides and a couple of privates as we sat at our midday meal. My father saw them pass the window. He sprang up exclaiming:

"Why, there is Colas! and he has brought some comrades with him."

We both hurried out—I, full of wonder that he should have returned so soon and again without giving us warning. The soldiers stood in front of my uncle's door; but we soon saw that they were all strangers.

"Mon Dieu!" cried my father, "can anything be amiss?" For we saw my uncle gesticulating eagerly as if he had received an unwelcome communication.

"I tell you," he was declaring, as we came up, "I tell you my son is not here, nor has he been. He has never been near the place since he was ordered away last August. Never once."

The corporal shook his head.

"It won't do, mon ami," he rejoined, "for though I am willing to believe he is not here now, you only place yourself under suspicion by declaring he never has been here. I myself went with him to the Gare de Luxembourg at Brussels and saw him take his place for Paliseul; the station-master there remembers his arrival; a man

from the village up above followed him for a couple of miles hither, and saw him take his way down the hill towards Frahan. Now, after that, what is the use of denying that he came?"

"But, monsieur le caporal," recommenced my uncle, "I am ready to take my oath he never came. Why should he have come suddenly like that?"

The corporal looked very angry.

"Ah, you peasants are less stupid than you try to appear. Your denial only implicates yourself. But, you see, we know too much. The lad came to get five hundred francs. You naturally——"

"Five hundred francs!" interrupted my uncle, the colour going out of his bronzed face. "I don't know what you mean, monsieur le caporal."

"Mon oncle," I said, coming forward, "I think I can explain. Colas was here on Tuesday night, and he did come for five hundred francs. Monsieur le Doyen lent them to him. He did not wish you to know."

"Well," said the corporal as I paused, "and what then?"

"Then he started off to catch the night mail to Brussels," I said.

"The morning train would have been quite time enough for Brussels," said the corporal with a meaning look at his companions, "and it's a curious thing that he never went back to Palfseul that night for all his hurry. Did you happen to set him on the way, my lad?"

He asked this with a searching glance.

"No, monsieur le caporal," I replied.

"He preferred that I should not."

"Then," he went on, "you do not know which road he took?"

"Oh yes, I do," I said quickly; "we watched him cross the river on the ice at the weir. Above the slate quarry there."

"Very good," he continued. "Is not that a rather unusual way up the hill?"

"Certainly, monsieur le caporal. He took it because he thought he was less likely to meet any one."

"And whither does that road under the hill lead—that one which ends at the slate quarry?"

"It leads to Alle—to Sedan," I answered innocently.

"Yes, to the frontier. However, you say you saw him go up the hill?"

"I did not say so, monsieur le caporal."

"But I suppose you did see him?"

"Colas," cried my uncle, "you did see him! Say you saw him!"

"Mon oncle," I said falteringly. "Monsieur le caporal—it was dark. The rocks hid him."

"That is quite enough," replied the soldier. "My good man, I fear your son has cut out a sad future for himself. The case is only too clear, and must be dealt with as it deserves. I am sorry I misjudged you—but there—how can one know?"

Almost all the village had gathered round while this scene was going on. At the end of it my uncle turned without a word to any one, went into his house and shut the door behind him. Then above the buzz and wender and comment which broke out rose the voice of Monsieur le Doyen.

"My friends," he said, "next to the lad's own father, I suppose this blow falls more heavily on me than on any one. As far as I am concerned, I am quite ready to forgive the hand which did it, and as to you, I beg you to suspend judgement, and to abstain as far as possible from uncharitable comment until we know something further."

But days wore on into weeks, and we knew nothing further, and poor Clémence went about like a ghost. If she would only have spoken to some one of all that must have been on her mind, perhaps she would have borne it better; but she kept the closest silence—even to me. I used now and then to almost smile to myself as I remembered how easy I had thought the wooing of her would be if Colas were once out of the way.

The frost lasted with more or less severity until nearly the end of February, and then the thaw came, so to speak, all in a moment. The older villagers looked grave as they heard the crashing, grinding sound with which the huge blocks of ice detached themselves rapidly from the crumbling banks and began to work their way down stream.

"What is there to fear?" I asked my father as we stood together on our little plot of ground beside the river.

"What is there to fear?" he repeated.

"Well, that I can scarcely say, for I have never seen a thaw so rapid. But, you see, during the long frost the Semois has run so low that there cannot possibly be water enough to carry the ice-packs away round the many curves of its course. They will move down until they find some slight obstacle; there they will mass themselves higher and higher until the water behind them has gathered sufficient force to burst through the wall or drive it onward. I

remember something like it in my boyhood, and then I cannot tell you how much damage was done—bridges carried away, land devastated, houses washed down."

While he spoke my uncle Marcel joined us. He had changed terribly since the day the soldiers had come to arrest Colas. The longing for and the dread alike of news, the shock of the disgrace, had made an old man of him.

"I was speaking of the great 'débacle' of the year '28, mon frère," said my father. "Thou, too, canst remember how the ice was dashed out by the current against the old mill till it fell in ruins. Look, there is a pack forming which can easily wreck the ateliers of the slate quarry. Would it not be better to profit by past experience, and avert disaster as far as possible? Let us collect all the help we can, and break up the mass as it forms. If we cannot keep the river course clear, we can at least do a little towards it."

My uncle assented, and in less than an hour, along several miles of the Semois's course, the men of Rochehaut and Frahan were doing all they could to ward off the threatened danger. We had already been a long time at work, when some one touched me on the arm, and looking round, I saw the garde champêtre, Etienne Roux.

"Colas," he said, "dost thou know whether thy uncle Marcel is up stream or down?"

I shook my head.

"I know nothing about him. I have seen nothing but ice-blocks all afternoon."

"Well," he went on, "then thou must go in one direction and I in the other, and if thou art the one to find him, bring him to the weir, and make him understand on the way that there is something terrible waiting for him."

"What do you mean?" I cried.

"Come this way," he answered, "then you can see for yourself."

I think I had guessed what it was before I saw by the light, which was now fading, something, of which the outline was blurred by clinging fragments of ice, lying on the grass beside the river.

I stood speechless with horror.

"It is your cousin Colas," said Etienne, lowering his voice as we stood and looked. "We found him there a little way below

the weir. He was frozen in deep. He must have fallen from the rocks above on to the thin ice that night you know of. He was probably killed by the fall, for his head is fearfully knocked about. Well, after all, it will be some sort of comfort to his father to know that he is not the swindler and deserter he seemed to be."

I scarcely remember how we broke the tidings to my uncle, nor how he bore it. From the confusion of that terrible evening only one incident comes back to me clearly, and that is how, as we bore poor Colas's body up the village on the rough bier we had made, we met Monsieur le Doyen and Clémence coming home from vespers.

"Has there been an accident?" asked the priest.

But Clémence had caught sight of the discoloured uniform and of my uncle Marcel walking stricken by the head of the bier.

"Ah!" she cried, "it is Colas—it is Colas."

Then she sank unconscious to the ground, and her uncle raised her up, and I helped him to carry her home.

The inquest over Colas's body brought to light no better explanation of his death than that conjectured by Etienne Roux; in fact, no other explanation was possible. Monsieur le Doyen's five hundred francs were found carefully strapped in his pocket-book, almost uninjured. The good old man devoted them to clearing Colas's name from the slur which rested on it in his regiment.

"Why should I not?" he asked sadly, when my uncle protested a little. "I loved the lad, and I have no one now to put by money for since Clémence has gone."

For, less than a week after we had buried Colas in the cemetery at the top of the hill, Clémence had died quietly, and no one doubted that it was of a broken heart. I alone knew that it was something beyond her love for my cousin that had killed her, though she bade me good-bye on her deathbed without even so much as alluding to the great mistake she had made in trying to serve the man she loved.

And if I have kept our secret until now, when I am an old man, it is more for her sake than for my own.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

It was a lovely summer's evening. A delicious stillness surrounded the Palace, and the silence was broken only by the music of the Rothery, flowing between deep banks down the glen.

All the menkind were far away except one, who was pacing slowly up and down his private sitting-room, situated in the west wing of the Palace. In their part of the house the servants talked in subdued voices as if afraid of being overheard, a very unusual proceeding on their part. In her turret chamber Penelope Winskell sat in a great carved oak chair, leaning her beautiful head upon her hands, and looking sadly out upon the deepening shadows of the glen.

She was dressed in black, and no white fichu relieved the gloom of her attire, but in contrast to the black dress her brilliant complexion was now even more noticeable than formerly.

She was deep in thought, and strangely enough, her thoughts, instead of lingering round her dead mother, had retraced the path back to the time when Philip Gillbanks had been an unbidden guest at the Palace. Then Penelope had treated him coldly, but now she would have liked to see him again. He was a breath from the outer world of which she knew so little, and the admiration which she had seen in his face had lingered almost unconsciously in her memory. Up to that time the

girl had lived a life of thought, but since then, quite in spite of herself, nature had taken its own way, and the spirit of romance had crept unbidden in. Her mother's sudden death had revealed to her the depth of a loneliness which she had not hitherto felt, and which she had never expected to realise. She was now alone, intensely alone except for her uncle. He had educated her, he had taught her to think; and, now she had learnt this, she had nothing round which to centre her thoughts. Sooner or later the wish to love, and to be loved, comes to all women who deserve the title, and Penzie Winskell had, as it were, suddenly stretched out her hands towards the unknown world, craving to know the secret of truest life. She did not explain it to herself in this way, but she knew now that she was lonely. Philip Gillbanks was the only man who had by his admiration revealed to her that she was beautiful, and that she possessed power over men. This was the reason why her thoughts at this moment went back to him.

Her father and her brother seemed to be quite outside the circle of her real life. She could not help despising them for being content to aspire to nothing beyond the mere rude life and emotions of farmers; moreover, she despised them for striving to so little purpose. Penelope knew from her uncle and from her own observation, that slowly but surely the Winskell family were sinking deeper and deeper into difficulties. She knew, too, that the King of Rothery and the heir to the title despised her for being a weak woman, fit only to sit at home with the fastidious uncle, and considered them as merely useless appendages of the King's family. What good did their learning do? Did it free any

single acre from its burden of mortgage ! Did it bring in a single gold piece ?

Penelope was a strange mixture of pride and strong self-will, of passionate affection and selfishness. She could love and she could hate, but in youth there is a coldness often joined to love which sorrow's rude touch alone appears to cure. The young feel strong, and yet have no field wide enough upon which to exercise that strength ; and so complex is every character, that it is in vain to try to classify them.

The Princess had grown up in this wild if beautiful solitude with two dominant ideas : these being that at any cost the house of Rothery must be saved from downfall, and that her uncle was the only person capable of accomplishing this redemption.

Often in her day-dreams she had seen the ancient glories of the Kings of Rothery return in full splendour. She had seen the greatest in the land soliciting her hand, and promising her the fame that was due to her ancient lineage. At such times Penelope had walked with a statelier step down the long, dreary passages of the old and dilapidated Palace, feeling that she was indeed a Princess ; but again she had become conscious of the boerish ways of her father and of her brother, and suddenly her ideal had fallen. Would Dukes and Earls come and woo this lonely Princess, whose Palace so sadly stood in need of repair, and whose father, the King, took delight in the commonest manual labour, and drank as hard and swore as lustily as the roughest farmer in the dales ?

At such times of reflection, Penelope sat in her turret chamber and listened to the music of the Rothery with feelings of extreme dejection. Then suddenly she would start up and inwardly rage because she was merely a girl, and, therefore, utterly powerless.

"There is but one way in which I can help, and that is by marrying some one rich and great who, because of his love for me, will care about the honour of our house, as much as I do myself."

At this point in her reflections, Penelope would walk down to the Duke's room, which was full of books and strange tomes, and she would come and sit by him on a low footstool. His presence always restored her injured feelings of pride and self-respect. If only he had been her father, the house of Rothery would have had no fall, and she knew that she would

now be mixing with her equals, instead of being merely a penniless Princess, whose mother could not understand her, and whose father and brother despised her for being born a woman.

This evening Penelope had been going through one of these sad moods. Her mother's funeral was over, and the girl now understood how little sympathy she had ever received from her, and how little comfort the Queen had found in her only daughter.

But this thought did not bring repentance. Hers was a strong nature that scorned repentance, yet she now thought more gently of the long-suffering woman, who had found so little pleasure in her life, and who could not understand the weariness of existence so often experienced by her clever daughter.

Penzie's cleverness did not consist in many accomplishments. She sang because she loved singing, but no one had trained her rich contralto voice. When all was soft and beautiful, Penelope, who had always been brought up hand in hand with nature as it were, could laugh and say sharp things to her brother. When the storms of winter burst over the lonely glen and shook the old gables of the house, then Penelope realised that she was a weak woman, and passion raged within her heart as did the elements among the stubborn trees. Without being able to express it to herself, the girl felt that she was a woman who could make a name for herself, for she knew she could crush her own feelings in order to satisfy her ambition.

To-day for a whole hour, whilst the sun set beneath the rounded outline of the trees, Penelope sat with her head on her hands beside the open window. The soft air blew in and fanned her beautiful cheek unheeded. The rooks flew across the glen on their way to their roosting-place, and the chorus of small birds was gradually hushed. The Rothery alone, singing its unending song, bounded from boulder to boulder, or ran swiftly in deeper beds, yet going ever onward to the sea, restlessly seeking a larger sphere, unknowing that what it sought would destroy its own identity.

When the darkness deepened Penelope rose slowly and stood by the window. She did not know how beautiful she was, for even Philip's admiration had been somewhat veiled, but she knew that she was capable of great things, and that she had the power to

accomplish them. She wanted the chance only, and then. . . !

"My uncle will help me," she said aloud, "he can do everything. He is a true Winskell and so am I, only I am a woman."

She opened the door, and, for the first time in her life, she felt a fear of the gloomy winding stairs. Now that her mother was dead she was alone in the turret. A little shudder passed over her, and then she laughed.

"How ludicrous," she said aloud; "as if mother would want to come back to her dreary life! She did not care as much about the Winskells as I do, nor did she appreciate the ghost of my great-aunt."

Pensiope had never feared the family ghost. She even had a sympathy with the story of the proud Princess who still watched over the affairs of the Winskells, but she did not wish to meet her mother's ghost. Her quiet gaze, out of which love had died for want of sustenance, would have frightened her.

In a few minutes, however, Penelope, with an effort of which she was proud, shook off her fears and walked very firmly and slowly down the stairs; and then crossed the large hall, in which no lamp was yet lighted. A large dog, sleeping on the mat, heard her footfall and stretched itself cringing towards her as if it feared she would not notice it. But to-day Penelope stooped and pressed her hand firmly over his head as she said:

"Nero! Why are you here, I wonder?"

Instead of barking the dog set up a dismal howl which annoyed the Princess, and she impatiently pushed the dog aside.

"Be quiet, Nero. Isn't this house sad enough without that howl! The family still exists, even though the old prophecy said the doom would come when the Palace should be propped with bands of iron. Hush, Nero; as long as I live there shall be no iron bands."

Then she walked on, the dog following her sadly, as if its duty was to guard her in this solitary house.

After crossing the hall Penzie entered a long passage, the same which Philip Gillbanks had traversed, and, as the girl walked on, the thought of him again recurred to her.

He was tall, and strong, and good-looking, but he knew nothing of the old feeling which a true Rothery must possess. How could he have it? He was a tradesman's son.

"No," she thought, "no, I will never marry a 'nouveau riche,' never. A woman can only love her equal; but I wonder why I think of that stranger, for most likely I shall never see him again."

When she reached the end of the passage she paused before a door; a streak of light came from beneath it and straggled across the passage floor.

Penzie Winskell knocked softly, and the Duke's voice answered:

"Come in."

The room was dark, being panelled with oak. The windows looked westward, and reached low down with deep window-sills, which made charming seats for the Princess. As a girl she had spent her happiest hours in this room, being taught by her uncle all kinds of knowledge, much of which, however, forms no part of a modern young lady's education.

This evening the Duke sat in an old deep-seated arm-chair covered with leather, much worn, but which still stood the test of time, having been good when first made. On a low oak table near stood a lamp, and he leaned a little sideways in order to let the light fall on his book. In the centre of the room, and in the near corner, the fading daylight still held sway, and as Pensiope approached her uncle she appeared to him to be a strange visitant, so unusual was the blending of the natural and artificial light which fell upon her. The Duke placed a marker in his book and slowly closed it, whilst Penzie seated herself on the low sill. The Duke looked at her, full of contradictory feelings. He loved her dearly because he had moulded her; he had taught her, he had been a true father to her in many ways, but he had not been able to give her what he did not possess, and he forgot that similar seed sown in different soils springs up in various ways. He had not taken into account her woman's nature, or he had miscalculated the effect it would have upon his teaching.

"Well, Princess, so you want company?"

"Yes," said Penelope, clasping her white, shapely hands over her head, where the tiny curls let loose from an antique comb turned many ways like vine tendrils.

"I have been sitting upstairs and thinking—thinking, till I felt I must come and talk to you, uncle. What are you reading? I don't know why I am so restless. I want—I want—oh! I don't know what I want."

"How old are you, Princess? I forget."

"I was twenty nearly a year ago. You know my birthday is on St. John's Day, and that will be in a week. Don't you remember, uncle, you promised that I should some day see the world, and that I should live to fulfil my destiny? What did you mean?"

The Duke smiled. His smooth lips, so well shaped to express sarcasm, also expressed obstinate determination.

"You think the time has come?"

"Yes, I want to do something for poor Rothery. You know I am brave, and that I am ready and willing to do as you tell me."

The Duke rose and slowly paced up and down the room with his head sunk on his chest, as if he were trying to settle some difficult question with himself.

"Pensie, you are not a child, you have always shown sense and determination. When you were a child no one could make you do anything by force, only by persuasion. I saw plainly that one day you would be a woman worthy of other Princesses of Rothery, and I trained you."

"You have taught me, and you have shown me that it was a woman's duty to be brave, uncle."

"And self-sacrificing. I feared for you because all women are frail."

"Not all, uncle," and Penelope raised her head. "You know I can bear a great deal."

"Yes, at the time, at the time—but afterwards? Women have no great sustaining power; they fall when you least expect it of them."

"I know what you mean, uncle. You think that if I—if I cared; but you are mistaken."

"You are a true Winskell, child. Tell me, can you sacrifice yourself, your inclinations, your life for an object?"

"Yes, I can. You mean for our home."

"I want to be plain with you. You can now fully understand. For years things have been going from bad to worse, we have been sinking deeper into debt. Instead of using his brains your father uses his arms, and fancies that will stop the tide. Nothing he does will prevent the downfall of this house—nothing but—"

"I know, uncle, I must marry a rich man: a man who will care enough for me to spend his money freely here. You mean that."

"Yes, Princess."

"I will do it—only give me the chance."

"Wait—do you understand? A woman, a beautiful woman as you are, child, is so easily led away by flattery, by what she calls love. She will throw every consideration to the winds to gratify her dreams of love—often a mere passing fancy. I do not speak without knowledge, child. When I was young I would have saved these acres, but now—"

Penelope had never heard her uncle talk of his own past life. She opened her large eyes which flashed so easily, and gazed admiringly at his face.

"Uncle, tell me; you never spoke of it before."

"Not now, not now, child. Some day, perhaps; but it is your turn now. The only chance for the old lands lies in your power."

"My brother will marry a peasant. I feel sure of that. What lady would have him? Oh, we are the only real Winskells left, uncle, you and I."

She rose quickly and stood up to her full height. She was above the Duke's shoulder, but so exquisitely proportioned that there was not an ungraceful line about her.

"I failed, Penelope."

"But I shall not. You will believe in me, won't you?"

"I will try to do so. Listen. You must marry a rich man, but I want you if you can, Pensie, to love him. With your nature it would be dangerous to hate him."

"I shall not think of myself."

"Can you help it?"

Penelope laughed. The laugh was not exactly joyous; it seemed to make the old oak shiver. It was so old, and she was so young—so young and so ignorant.

"If I make up my mind to anything, no matter what, you know I can do it. You have often said so yourself. I mastered some of my difficult lessons because you said that I must if I wished to be worthy of the old Winskells. Besides, it is not difficult; and I will obey you."

"Can you—can you?" said the Duke, half to himself.

"I will wear the talisman from this day, and that will remind me always of my vow."

Penelope hurried across the room and out of the passage. As she almost ran to the room where it was kept, she fancied that she heard steps following her. She paused; then a glow of pride flushed her cheek. The sound must be the footsteps

of the proud Princess! Evidently she approved of her wearing the talisman. When she came back to her uncle her face was resolute.

"Uncle, I will save the house of Rothery. You say I can, and I will."

The Duke took her hand and kissed it.

"Well said, child! Together we can save it, and we will."

COINS OF THE REALM.

It would seem to be an ungracious thing to find fault with the coins of the realm. They are so useful in themselves and so welcome in whatever shape they come, that artistic merit may in them be deemed superfluous. And people were very well satisfied, on the whole, with the coinage as it existed during the first half-century of Victoria's reign. The Guelphic profiles on the current coin were bold and straightforward, anyhow, and the portrait of the young Queen showed a gracious and pleasing face to all the world. There is the aspect of Royalty in the head, simply filleted and without adornments, that makes the old Victorian sovereign pleasant to behold. The more recent coinage is equally welcome, but it inspires at first sight a momentary misgiving. Is this, indeed, our English Queen, or is the image that of some potentate not of our acquaintance? The latest pattern has more merit and dignity than that of the Jubilee series, but does not come up to one's ideal of a fine coin. But that, indeed, would perhaps be far to seek, and we might have to go back to years B.C. to find a perfect specimen.

A fine coin was that gold stater of Philip the Second of Macedon, which, according to recent authorities, was the model of our first native British coinage. There had been gold discoveries in those remote days—say, B.C. 356—and a great coinage of gold procured from the mines of Philippi was then set on foot, which proved perhaps not an unmixed blessing to the country, as it may have excited the cupidity of those Gaulish tribes who plundered Greece B.C. 279, and who may have come home with their sacks full of gold, and spread the coins of Greece among their friends and neighbours.

A considerable number of early British coins have been found, chiefly in the southern and western counties of England, which probably date from before

the Roman occupation, and point to the existence of British kingdoms of a more civilised character than the Commentaries that Cæsar writ gave them credit for. But it seems that we must blame not the generally truthful Julius, but some unscrupulous interpolator for the statement that the Britons used only barter, and had brass and iron rings for circulating medium. But anyhow the coins are but barbarous imitations of a beautiful original. The head of Apollo is represented by a grotesque profile, the chariot and horses on the reverse of the coin by a sprawling device, such as a child of tender years might draw upon a slate. Inscriptions are rare, but one occurs of some interest, as "Cunobelin" is Shakespeare's Cymbeline, and we may fancy that the coin was dropped by Imogen on her pilgrimage to Wales.

The rude British coins must have soon been superseded by the technically excellent coinage of the Romans, who had mints in London, and York, and Colchester. And, doubtless, the Roman money continued to circulate long after the Legions had left the island. The Saxons, when they came, did not bring with them the art of coining; their rôle was to take other people's money, and they knew the value of it well enough. And they seem to have brought with them rudimentary notions of the penny and the shilling, although at first the sceat was their unit of account. Take care of the sceats, and the shillings will take care of themselves, was a good proverb in those days. But the Saxon shilling was a moveable quantity, and sometimes represented fivepence, and at others only fourpence. It was William the Conqueror who fixed the shilling immutably at twelve pennies, and gave the form to our monetary system which it still retains. Had he only made it ten how easy would have been the slide into the decimal system, which now seems impossible.

Under the later Saxon monarchs the silver coinage went on merrily. There were moneyers in every important town, with numerous artisans in their employment, but no artists apparently, for their coins are but rude and feeble imitations of Roman models. And there was no great improvement under the first Norman Kings; although they reduced the number of the moneyers, and finally concentrated them all in the Tower, where the "Royal Mint" remained till it was removed in

1810 to Tower Hill, where the guards from the Royal fortress still have it in charge.

During all this period, from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, there is no trace of any gold coinage in England. Silver was the general medium of exchange, and such gold coins as were current came from abroad—florins from Florence, bezants from Byzantium, and even Arabic coins from the great Mohammedan empires of the East. But on the sixteenth of August, 1257, a Royal writ commanded the Mayor of London to proclaim that the gold money of the King, Henry the Third, should be current at the rate of twenty pennies sterling for every gold penny. And this ratio of value between silver and gold has been preserved, with few variations of any consequence, till our own days.

Under the Plantagenets, the coinage of the realm assumed a much higher character. The King's head on the silver coins is conventional, but full of merit; there is no attempt at portraiture, and the same design does duty generally throughout the reign. But it is not till the days of Edward the Third that any extensive coinage of gold is recorded. And then in 1344 appeared the gold noble, a really beautiful coin, rather heavier than our existing "sovereign." On this coin appears for the first time the ship or galley, said to commemorate Edward's destruction of the French fleet at Sluys, in 1340, and an emblem of the sovereignty of the seas now claimed by the English monarch. Thus an old distich is current:

For four things our noble sheweth to me—
King, ship, and sword, and power of the sea.

And while the King, armed and crowned, appears no longer on horseback, but riding and ruling the waves; on the other side are armorial insignia and sacred emblems, with the mystic inscription, "I.H.C. Transiens per medium illorum ibat." This is a verse taken from the Vulgate, Luke, fourth chapter, thirtieth verse, translated in the authorised version, "But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." In those days this verse had a peculiar significance, as it was not only in repute as a charm against perils by land or sea, but was also supposed to be used by the alchemists in their conjurations, and to be repeated by them at the supreme moment of the precipitation of the precious metal, "per medium illorum" signifying, according to some, "by means of fire and sulphur."

As people could not make out how Edward came by so much gold, and as it was known that one Ripley, an alchemist, was working for the King in the Tower, this issue of "nobles" was generally supposed to have come out of the alchemist's crucible. And thus the possessor of a "noble" had not only a coin, but a talisman, and a potent protection against fire and thieves and the various perils of land and sea.

The temporary triumph of the house of York has its permanent record in the coins of the realm. Under Edward the Fourth the noble was raised in weight and value, and, being now adorned with the rose as the badge of the house of York, was called a rose noble. Another gold coin of the same value was called an angel, as it bore the image of the archangel Saint Michael. But the Scriptural charm is repeated in all the gold coins of the period, and does not finally disappear until the epoch of the Reformation, when it went its way, with many other relics of earlier days. The ship, also, goes sailing on through the coins of many a reign till it finally disappears under James the First.

Under the Tudors a great change occurs in the coinage, which begins to assume a more modern form. In the older coinage the silver penny weighed, or should weigh, just the pennyweight troy, or twenty-four grains, and two hundred and forty of these pennyweights went to the pound, so that the "£" represented actually a pound of silver, the "s," or solidus, a conventional twentieth of a pound, and the "d," or denarius, the much-enduring penny. But the last was the only denomination represented by an actual coin, and, as in the course of centuries there had been a constant tendency to reduce the weight of the currency, a large readjustment had become necessary. Under Henry the Seventh for the first time the "sovereign" appears as the proper representative of a pound, and a gold standard seems to have been definitely fixed. And with this the shilling makes its appearance as an actual coin, the groat having been previously the most handy silver piece, with crowns and half-crowns both in silver and gold.

With Henry the Seventh, too, comes in the art of portraiture in coins, with the advantage of superior art in the engraving of the dies. Indeed a collection of English coins from this period offers a series of characteristic portraits of our

monarchs. Our English Bluebeard appears now in profile and now in full face, at first in the grace of youth, and latterly with the ferocious bulldog look. And Philip and Mary, like gossips on a snuffbox, face to face, suggesting the lines in "Hudibras,"

Still amorous, and fond, and billing,
Like Philip and Mary on a shilling.

In the coins of Elizabeth, the designers of our latter-day "sovereigns" may probably have sought inspiration and a precedent for the new coinage. No engraver of that age would have ventured to depict Her Majesty as getting old. Still, the flowing or braided locks disappear as the Virgin Queen advances in life, but the characteristic ruff supplies their place. James the bonhomme shows well on a coin, and his son, the unfortunate Charles, was a virtuoso in coins, and his reign is marked by many good pieces. Even some of those produced under the stress of siege and civil war display uncommon skill and spirit. The coins of the Commonwealth are as plain and severe as you might expect, but there are fine coins by Simon bearing the image of the Lord Protector.

The Restoration brought about sundry changes in the coinage. Hitherto the coins had been hammered—the impression, that is, struck with a sledge-hammer—and although the screw-press had been introduced a century before, it met with no favour at the hands of the officers of the Mint. But Charles introduced the new "mill," which serrated the edges of the coin as well as striking the impression, and milled money gradually superseded the other, although it was not till 1732 that all hammered gold coins, then known as broad pieces, were finally called in. Importations of gold by the African Company gave rise to the popular guineas. And Charles, for the first time, instituted a regular copper coinage.

There were, indeed, copper coins already in existence, manufactured under Royal patent by some favoured beneficiary. Lord Harrington, the guardian of the Queen of Bohemia, had held such a patent for farthings, which, for a time, went by his name.

I will not bate a Harrington o' the sum,
writes rare old Ben in one of his masques. Charles started the familiar halfpenny. Pennies in copper came later—not till 1797—so that the once popular expression of "halfpence" for copper coins in general had its justification in the facts of the case. At the same period, dating from the in-

troduction of the milled money, silver coins under the value of sixpence ceased to be struck, and silver pennies disappeared from circulation. But small quantities of silver coins, from a penny to fourpence, have been ever since struck as Maundy money in order that the recipient of the King's or Queen's alms on Holy Thursday may have the right number of pence, corresponding to the number of years of the monarch's age, told out in good wholesome silver.

Threepenny pieces were first coined by Edward the Sixth. As for the fourpenny bit, or Joey, so called after the economist Joseph Hume, who is said to have suggested their issue, the coin seems to have vanished altogether, although for a long time it circulated with the threepenny piece, and bus-conductors used to distinguish between the pieces by running the thumb-nail along the edge, for the fourpenny piece was milled, while the other was not.

But for small change Charles's halfpence, which were made current by proclamation of the sixth of August, 1672, long had the field to themselves. They were a first experiment in copper coinage, and the figure of Britannia on the reverse is said to have been designed with the beautiful Frances Stuart, afterwards Duchess of Richmond, for a model.

A good notion of these later Stuarts was the introduction of pewter or tin halfpence, anticipating the "nickel" of American and German small change, which is so much easier of carriage. Inscriptions round the edges of the larger coins instead of milling, such as are still seen on crown pieces, are of the same date. John Evelyn, of "Sylva," suggested the motto, "Decus et Tutamen," which is certainly neat and appropriate, as the inscription is at once an ornament and a defence against clipping and other defacements of the Royal image. And from the same Restoration period dates the practice of making the Royal profile face the same way during the whole reign. Charles the First was literally Mr. Facing-both-ways, as Bunyan would have named him, and Charles the Second makes a volte-face in the course of his reign, but sticks to the right after that. William the Fourth faced to the right, and Victoria faces always to the left in all coins and medals.

It would not do to forget Queen Anne, whose farthings have won such surprising fame. They are really good coins by

John Croker, and dated 1714, and the Queen's death put a stop to their issue; so that they are really rather scarce, and a good specimen may be worth as much as fifteen shillings. The bust of the Queen on the coins recalls the fact that Queen Anne, on her accession, decidedly objected to being represented on the coins with neck and shoulders uncovered, as had been the custom, and that she was therefore accommodated with a fichu. Some of Queen Anne's guineas bear the inscription, "Vigo," in small letters, and this denotes that they were made from gold taken at Vigo in 1702, when so many rich galleons were captured or sunk. And so "Lima" on guineas of 1745-46 records Anson's successes on the coast of Peru, when he captured the Acapulco galleon, and brought home much treasure in silver and gold.

Another notable guinea, not very scarce, but still prized if only to place among charms and trinkets, is of a type designed by Louis Pingo in 1787, with a spade-shaped shield on the reverse; and these guineas, generally known as "spadeace," were issued till 1799. The copper coinage, too, of the same period is noticeable: a twopenny and penny piece, of 1797, the first of the kind ever issued, with a heavy rim, and plethoric-looking head of Farmer George, and on the reverse a figure of Britannia, now with lighthouse and shipping, and once more ruling the waves.

The guinea, it will be remembered, retired from the scene in 1817, and was succeeded by the "sovereign," which has reigned ever since without a rival. Among the chief events in its prosperous career may be noted the reappearance in 1871 of Saint George and his dragon, from a design by Plastrucci for George the Fourth—replacing the shield of arms which previously occupied the reverse of the coin. For some time the two models were issued together, but since 1874 George has had the field to himself. A fine George and dragon may be noticed on a "George noble" of Henry the Eighth's time, the saint brandishing a long spear or lance, better adapted for the killing of dragons, one would think, than the short sword with which our latter-day saint is armed.

But perhaps the most startling event in the recent annals of our coinage was the introduction of the florin of 1849—a new coin, designed as a sort of tentative approach to the decimal system. The florin was unlucky at starting, for the words "Dei Gratia," which had figured on

the coinage ever since the days of Edward the First, had been omitted. A great outcry was made against the "godless coins," which were soon recalled. But a curious fact is that few of them came back, and that some three quarters of a million of them remain—not in circulation, for they are rarely met with, but hoarded or used as trinkets, keepsakes, or curiosities.

Of more recent interest is the Jubilee coinage, just now superseded by a certainly better model. Connected with this is the story of the sixpences, which when gilt proved to be excellent imitations of half-sovereigns. And this incident is paralleled in the reign of George the Fourth, when a half-sovereign was produced so wonderfully like a gilt sixpence, that the same advantage was taken of the likeness. The Jubilee sixpences, like the half-sovereigns, were recalled, but very few found their way to the melting-pot; they have gone to join the godless florins in the limbo of vanished coins. The same may be said of the shillings with Royal arms on the reverse, of which only a stray specimen here and there remains in circulation.

A GLANCE AT NORTH UIST.

VERY few mere tourists find their way to the Uists, North and South. It is just as well that this is so, seeing that the accommodation for them is exceedingly meagre. During the season, at any rate, the two hotels of Loch Maddy on North Uist, and Loch Boisdale on South Uist, are pretty sure to be crowded—with anglers, not sightseers. The man who comes hither at a venture will, in all likelihood, be disappointed, first with the scenery, and, secondly, by the innkeeper's regretful apologies at his inability to receive him. The steamers which carry passengers and the mails to these isles of the Outer Hebrides are far from being the best or the largest of the fleet of Mr. David MacBrayne. And the ordinary holiday seeker will not, unless he is a glutton for sea-breezes, appreciate the need he may be under of making the round tour by boat in futile quest of an anchored roof to his head. The thing to do is to wire to the island you wish to visit, and not to set out for it until you have telegraphic assurance that there is a bedroom for you. The Uists are not like common British seaside resorts. They have no trim lodging-houses with placards in the windows inviting

visitors at least to take tea in them. The rule of the crofter still holds here, much to the dissatisfaction of the lairds of the land, and a night or series of nights in a Hebridean crofter's hut cannot be thought of by an experienced person without grave misgivings.

As the steamer approaches North Uist from the Minch, you are struck by the extraordinary interminglement of land and water here. Rocky and weather-clad capes run out towards the sea, and the sea in its turn rushes and winds into the heart of the island, forming an infinite number of lochs, great and small. These last in their turn are connected with others farther inland and on different levels. If the island were more near the centres of our great towns, it might be adjusted with a little engineering effort into a settlement that for its amphibious eccentricities would rival old Venice herself. Here, however, we are in the wilds. There are two or three rather assuming stone houses built close to the landing stage; there is the hotel; one sees a church, and an institution which may be either a workhouse—an absurd idea here!—a school, or a lunatic asylum; there are also a dozen or so cottages of the old style, with the smoke drifting lazily from their open doors. And that is all, at least as far as human habitations are concerned. Once you have gone half a mile from Loch Maddy—as the township is called—you are surrounded by heather and bog, and lakes and lakelets with sprawling arms; hills of no very startling shape are before you close at hand, and in the distance you see the grey outlines of the heights of Harris to the north and South Uist to the south. Sea birds are screeching over your head and across the tidal reaches of water on the right hand and the left. And you will be fortunate if the midges are sparing you the torments they have at their disposal. The road meanders subtly across the green and crimson country, turning with the sinuities of the waterways, towards the north-west, where the laird of the isle has his abode.

It is quite worth while to climb the first hill that confronts you in your wanderings. The heather is thick on its flanks and tries hard to trip you. But it need not be difficult to overcome these trials. And there is compensation in the luscious perfume, which seems to fill the buzzing bees with an insane ecstasy. Having attained the summit of a few hundred feet above

sea-level, the marvellous scene is well declared. North, south, east, and west there is a surface little less flat than the Fens, with a dozen or so rounded, stony, and crimson hills rising from its midst, and water, water everywhere among the land. At low tide this water turns the island into a bewildering archipelago. The number of its islets is countless, and the Atlantic bounds them. Looking along the winding road you see, perhaps, a single human being leading a cow. The heather, mosses, and lichens at your feet are worth some regard, and so are the insects and entomological specimens which animate the mild air. But Princetown on Dartmoor is a volatile place compared to North Uist, thus seen.

Yet stay; even while you are compassionating this poor, dismal, remote tract of land and water, the sun comes from behind the heavy Atlantic clouds and gives instant glory to the island. Its carpet of heather glows with Tyrian brilliancy. The yellow seawrack, which clings to the rocky zones of its tidal lakes, turns dazzling as liquid gold; and the myriad of little lakes elsewhere are like pools of silver. The sense of desolation remains, but it is now to be associated with a spot of dreamlike, entrancing beauty.

It is as well, however, not to come to this romantic little island without a full purse. Civilised mortals are made to pay well for their periodic incursions into the Hebridean wilds. The twenty or five-and-twenty souls who make up the hotel's complement do not come here to save money, but to catch fish. If they may succeed to their heart's content in the latter particular, they may also be relied upon to treat parsimony with scorn. Good days on the lakes are celebrated with champagne, and whisky has to do full service good days and bad days alike.

There is a fine martial flavour about the guests at the table d'hôte. You could tell it at a glance. Those straight-backed, white-haired, tall old gentlemen who sit side by side with such fiercely twirled moustaches must be either Generals or Colonels; even as the dashing young men of forty or forty-five on the other side of the table carry the unmistakeable air military. In effect it is so. There is some good blood present. The veterans once made a small stir in the world—at least, in the frontier world of India. Now they are content to take trout in Loch Fada or Loch Huna of North Uist—until the

shooting begins, when they and their armouries will betake themselves elsewhere. For the North Uist shooting is not great, unless sea birds may be included in it; though on the other hand seals may be shot readily enough among the rocks of the adjacent isles, many of which are connected with the main island by fords at low water, across which it behoves the traveller to carry himself somewhat shrewdly. These straight-backed, strong-wristed veterans do not unbend readily in general society, but they may be relied upon to thaw comfortably in the smoking-room under the combined influences of cigars, toddy, memories of past sport in many lands, and hopes of good luck on the morrow. They keep their hearts and energies amazingly green upon the whole.

One such I am tempted to limn gently in outline. He was Colonel of a Highland regiment, small, bald as the proverbial billiard-ball, active as a bee, hot-tempered, and delightful. A happy chance threw me into his society for three or four days at one of these Hebridean inns. The tales with which he enlivened the tedium of the dull grey weather—with plenty of drenching rain—were good to hear and better still to remember. He was Scottish to the core, and had clan records at his fingers' ends. He was further an enthusiastic and most skilful piper. As soon as breakfast was over he would don his Glengarry bonnet, take up his beloved pipes, and begin a methodical course on them, marching to and fro in the hotel room and awakening exceedingly strong echoes. The hotel servants gathered in the corridor to listen to this unwonted concert, and the bare-legged lads and lassies hieing to school tarried outside and held their peace reverentially, while they forgot the school-master and the schoolmistress and all else except the absorbing music. And all the time the admirable little Colonel marched up and down the room with uplifted head and a fixed gaze. Few pipe-majors could beat him at the pastime. I hope I may never forget him. He was one of the most typical of Highlanders I have ever met, and withal rather curt and ill at ease in a society to which he had not willingly accustomed himself. While I write I have his photograph before me, taken with his pipes. It makes me smile with serene contentment to look at it.

But to recur to Loch Maddy. Entering the harbour if the weather is clear, you notice two large basalt hills, islets, stand-

ing boldly from the sea on either hand. These give their name to the place. They are the haven's "maddies," or watch-dogs. One would like to know something about the various craft they have, during the last two thousand years, seen enter here. The Picts were once much at home on North Uist. You may discover their rounded duns on certain of the tiny island spots in the many lakes which give such matchless individuality to the island. Not all the causeways which bound their homes to the shores can be traced, but some can. And by them are white and yellow lilies and tall reeds, offering delectable shelter to the trout in the heat of the day. It is a far leap from the time of the Picts to the eighteenth century. The imagination, however, may occupy itself with the Norwegians and Danes, who were once as much at home in these waters as the Hebridean herring-boats now are. Enough for us to remember the chase for Prince Charlie after Culloden. Loch Maddy was lively with war-ships then. But the Englishmen could not catch the Prince. He dodged them among the inlets of North Uist, and then from islet to islet. And finally Flora Macdonald, whose grave in Skye has now become a landmark to mariners, gave him her memorable aid through the island which has made her esteemed like a canonised saint. Prince Charlie had not a pleasant time up here. He was glad to gather crabs and cockles on the sea-shore, and make his dinner from them; and yet more glad when he could mix cow's brains and oatmeal and enjoy such Royal rissoles. But probably he found Flora's petticoats and gowns the most trying parts of his experience in quest of sheer liberty, when all hopes of a crown were at an end.

Now and then they have a cattle-fair at Loch Maddy. It is a great occasion. Boat after boat comes in from the isles from far and near, and the steamships also land their four-footed freights. Given fine weather, and one may almost be unmindful even of the midges amid this scene of excellent colour and extraordinary vivacity. You hear the Gaelic sounding on all sides then. It is difficult to think you are in a part of Great Britain. And the lowing of the shaggy, variegated little Highland kine, the bleating of the snow-white sheep—some four-horned, showing their St. Kilda origin—and lambs, added to the neighing of horses and the kicking of the ponies, all in conjunction, produce a fine

Babel of sound. Of course, at such a time the canny trader and the itinerant pedlar are much to the fore. They have their booths for gingerbread and ribbons. The villagers from the east coast of the island are almost overcome by the spectacle of so much commerce.

An artist would do well to arrange for a wire from Loch Maddy when such scenes as these are in progress. He would find an embarrassing amount of rich material for his brush. What with the crimson heather; the grey hills in the distance; the Atlantic clouds drifting, like huge white geese, one after the other across the blue heavens; the pale yellow cottages of the old time, so low at the threshold that the gaunt master of the house has to stoop to enter, and with the smoke sailing airily out of the blackened hole in the thatch; the gleaming water here, there, and everywhere, with its lilies, its lichened rocks, and the golden weed tangle which marks the tidal line; the cattle fighting the flies chest deep in the pools, and the infinite variety of the human element, there ought to be magnificent scope for the realist. A tipsy islander may be found here and there, and an idiot or two—there are a good many of the half-witted in the Hebrides—as well as a “cailleach” (old crone), who does not mind smoking in public the pipeful of tobacco that has been bestowed upon her by an indulgent stranger. As a study in complexions alone the cattle-fair at Loch Maddy would be worth seeing.

But the weather must be civil, else nowhere shall you find a more disconsolate gathering, or one more like to raise in you a sympathetic twinge or two of rheumatism.

Most people who come to North Uist come to fish. They do well. Whether for sea-fish or trout the island, with its ramificatory inlets, is an excellent angler's resort. The only drawback is the distance from the hotel of certain of the fresh-water lochs. This necessitates a drive out in the morning and the corresponding drive home in the evening. Weather and purse permitting, however, there need be no great hardship about this methodical view of North Uist's waterways, heather, hills, and moorland, some of which is bog bad to get entangled in.

There are also pedestrians who do not take an interest in fly-fishing. For these I must really write a few lines of warning, inspired—as all strong warnings must be

—by doleful experience. Let it be remembered in the first place that though the loch which is called Loch Maddy—and which is just a sea bay with innumerable arms—is only about ten miles in area, it has a coast line reckoned at some three hundred miles. Think of it! Your friend in a boat takes you three or four miles, and then, at your urgent request—you wish to stretch your legs—puts you ashore on some heathery knoll. He does not know what he is doing, and you, in proposing to stroll back to the hotel in time for the seven o'clock dinner, do not know what you are undertaking. Unless you take to the water, in fact, and swim sundry of the channels, you may chance to have a three days' tramp before you!

These channels, moreover, are not very easy to negotiate. They are in many instances blessed or cursed with an exceedingly swift current. Look at them when the tide is coming in. No boat could pull against them unless it were manned out of all proportion to its size. It may be imagined then that the swimmer would have to float at their mercy, and their mercy might not be kind enough to help him much on his way.

I, for my part, quite lost patience with Loch Maddy one afternoon. Having left the high-road—a capital one, considering—I got involved among lochs and sea inlets, and had finally, after several wasted hours, and when the sun had got alarmingly low in the heavens, to make a devious track in a direction immediately opposite to the one in which the hotel lay. It was dark when I reached my quarters, but I was grateful that I had succeeded. To be late for dinner was a small misfortune compared to what might have been my lot, had the night set in wildly—as it well can on these fringes of the Atlantic—and I had found myself forced to seek heather and rock shelter until the morning.

Upon the whole, North Uist is a quaintly gratifying place for a holiday. It is not sensational, though it may obviously become so, especially if you miss the tide in trying to cross the ford from one or other of its neighbour islets, and get involved in a race for life with the Atlantic waves. Nor, on the other hand, is it bracing. There are days, indeed, when, between vexatious midges and the relaxing air, you feel limp and dismal enough to give up the ghost—if any one were present to relieve you off-hand of your

vital part. But in the end you do not feel dissatisfied with your selection of a touring centre. And that is no small thing.

The worst of the Uists is the disagreeable hour at which it behoves you to depart from or arrive at them. The steamer goes from North Uist to South Uist at midnight, and reaches the latter place at the unfamiliar hour of half-past two in the morning. Nor may you then hope to continue the slumber you may have begun; for it does not stay at Loch Boisdale—the capital of South Uist—but journeys on immediately to the south.

Contingencies, however, as often as not, enable the harassed traveller to finish his night's sleep. We are here in the very homeland of fog and mist, storms and rain. It is never very cold off these Outer Hebrides isles; nor is it ever prostratingly hot. But frequently, just when the visitor has begun to put his portmanteaux together in readiness for the landing, the grey haze of the sea thickens and closes in. Then the captain gives the order "half-speed," and finally "stop." Down goes the anchor with a gruesome clanking, and an indefinite "wait" has begun. This is, of course, likely to be a most charming experience if there is a heavy swell on, and the traveller is not without qualms of sea sickness. But it cannot be helped. The outlying rocks of all the Hebrides are not to be faced at a venture; nor can the harbours themselves be tackled without every assurance of a sufficiency of sea-room.

THE BODE.

THE sun rode high at noontide, the wind blew from the north,
The boat lay trim and taut enough out on the dancing Forth,
And blue and bright across the waves lay the long links of Fife,
While on the shore the fisherman spoke to his month-old wife.

"Go home and keep the hearth, lass, and weep no more for me;
It's lying ripe and ready, the rich harvest of the sea.
Wouldst keep me like a bairn at home, when all the men are off,
With idle hands and empty pouch, a weakling and a scoff?"

"Go home and keep the hearth, lass, leave freit and dream alone,
I'm bound to do my honest best, and God can guard His own.
For all thou met a hare yestreen, for all thy dreams were bad,
I say, go home, and keep the hearth warm for thine own old lad!"

"Nay, but," she sobbed, "frae bonnie Perth thou knowst thou brought me here,
And we who spring of Highland blood we have our own strange lore.
My grand-dam had the second sight, and, as I love thee well,
I saw thy shroud below thy chin, I know what that would tell."

He kissed the rosy trembling lips, he kissed the drowned blue eyes,
He bade her look to laughing seas, and sunny, cloudless skies.
He swore the kerschief that she gave was all his jersey showed,
And she must be a Lowland wife, nor reck of Highland bode.

Out from the Haven full sailed there went a gallant bark,
The sun sank ever the Ochils, the shores of Fife grew dark;
The woman sate by her lonely hearth as the grey dawn filtered in,
She said, "I saw his shroud last night, it was abune his chin."

And long might Highland Mary watch through weary night and day,
For the boat that bore her mate from her to far off Stornaway;
For back to Seaton Harbour full many a coble came,
But never with the face she knew, the voice that spoke her name.

With a babe called for the father who never saw his face,
Through shade and shine each day she comes; looks from the landing place,
Then turns to keep the hearth where he will never enter now,
And she says, "Could I see his shroud to-night, it were abune his brow."

THE LATE MR. LYMPET.

A COMPLETE STORY.

If there was one thing on which we Lympets did pride ourselves, it was on the family name. From our earliest childhood we were taught to believe that a Lympet was apart from, and superior to all other men; as my dear father used to say, there were working people, gentry, nobility, and Lympets. The family held the first place in our estimations; we were Lympets first, and Britons afterwards. Not one of us but gloried in his birth, and did his best to live up to our proud old family motto, "quod tango teneo." As for our belief in the grandeur of our name, it did not admit of argument. It was almost a part of our religion, and, like the Chinese, we worshipped our ancestors. Not that they had done anything very particular. The mere student of history has possibly never even heard of them; for none of them ever acquired vulgar fame. No violent partisans they! In the broils and turmoils, the wars of parties and the feuds of factions, which marked the stormy

youth of England, they mixed but little. They played no prominent part for White Rose or Red Rose, King or Parliament, Stuart or Guelph. They never attempted to ride the high horse, and as a result, through all the troubles they kept the family seat. In truth, a Lympet had too little to gain to peril his life and lands in any one's cause. By birth he was placed above ambition. Being already a Lympet he could rise no higher, for, like the Rohan, he could make the proud vaunt: "Roi ne puis, Prince ne daigne, Lympet je suis!"

Therefore the Lympets generally held aloof, and when, as sometimes happened, they found themselves compelled to take their stand with one party or the other, they acted with great discretion, and compromised themselves as little as possible. As an instance of Lympet tact in trying times, I may mention the career of the sixth Baron Rockborough, who acceded to the headship of our house in the last year of the Great Rebellion. This nobleman first served in Ireland under Cromwell, who rewarded him with a large grant of land in that country; next, he was created Viscount Cumberground in the peerage of Ireland by Charles the Second after the Restoration; and finally he was advanced to the dignity of Earl of Kilproctor by William the Third, shortly after which just recognition of his merits the good old man passed away, full of years and honours, leaving behind him a name which will ever be fondly cherished by his descendants. As a benefactor of his species—I mean, of course, of the Lympets—he must be placed high above all our other ancestors, and second only to the Founder of the Family, Hugo de Lympet himself, who came over with the Conqueror, and won the estates which remain in the possession of his descendants to this day. And herein lies the secret of our family greatness and our family pride. What a Lympet grasped at the time of the Conquest, a Lympet holds in the present year of grace. For over eight hundred years we have remained firmly planted on the ground gained by our forefather; and if we never availed ourselves of the opportunities by which other families raised themselves to dazzling heights of magnificence, we also avoided the pitfalls which sooner or later swallowed up these same families and their followers.

But though our house has made no great figure in English history, I would not have you think that it has done the state no

service. On the contrary, the younger scions of our stock have always displayed a commendable eagerness to serve the country in any department where the duties were light and the pay was fair. It is only when the law of primogeniture is strictly observed that Lympets are possible; and when the law of primogeniture is strictly observed, superfluous sons can be but ill-provided for. But the public service is, despite the proverb, an excellent inheritance, and one to which the junior Lympets considered they were justly entitled.

I need hardly say that not one of them ever so far forgot himself as to stoop to trade; their sense of what was due to their name was too powerful to allow them to sink so far. So strong, indeed, was this feeling that the daughters of our house often preferred to pass their lives in single blessedness rather than change the dear old name of which they were so justly proud. Few families can boast so many old maids. The ribald have ventured to attribute this fact to the Lympet dowries, which are unfortunately small, and to the Lympet mouth, which is undeniably large, rather than to the Lympet pride. But how can such rude clay sympathise with the noble spark which fires a Lympet's breast? What can they know of the glorious associations which endear the grand old name of Lympet to every member of that noble house?

Unfortunately one cannot live upon a name—at least, not for ever. I lived on mine as long as it was possible, but a time at last came when I found that the Lympet name, highly as we rated it, was of little value on the back of a bill. Commercial people—hard, practical men—looked at it askance, and requested the additional security of some wretched Jones or Smith, who could not trace his pedigree beyond his grandfather. In short, I was becoming financially embarrassed, and, what was worse, did not know how to extricate myself. I had no occupation, no profession. My father had designed me for the Church, for he was the patron of a very snug living on his Irish property; but, alas! while I was still at school, the man Gladstone came along with his axe and lopped the Irish Church away like the diseased limb of a Hawarden oak. Thus prevented from serving the Church, I would have been very willing to serve the state; but—these are evil days for

Lympets!—the system of competitive examination proved a barrier I was unable to surmount, and England lost a valuable servant. As trade was out of the question and the bar offered no opening, I decided to adopt the career for which my talents best fitted me, and to do nothing at all. And I did it in excellent style, too, as a Lympet should; the honour of our name suffered nothing at my hands, I can assure you. My allowance from my father, which was small—for my sisters had to be provided for, and Cumberground, my elder brother, was wickedly extravagant—and a small private fortune which I had inherited from my mother, I employed mainly as pocket-money; almost everything else I obtained on credit. And so, throwing an occasional sop to Cerberus in the shape of a payment "on account" to the more pressing of my creditors, and resorting to an elaborate system of "paper" when I was in want of ready money, I contrived to live in honourable ease for a good many years.

But Time brings all things to perfection—and bills to maturity. Then they have to be renewed, and a renewed bill is a redoubled difficulty. Living on paper is like skating on ice. So long as it is strong enough to bear you, you can flourish about, cutting figures with the best; but if you overweight it, it suddenly gives way beneath your feet, and you vanish out of sight. Early last year certain unmistakable groans and cracks warned me that my footing was dangerous. Bill discounters who had always smiled on me began to frown, every post brought letters requesting payment of little accounts, and tradesmen besieged my doors or lay in wait for me in the street. Altogether the outlook was very black, or, at best, dun-coloured. Many a night I sat in my rooms gloomily smoking my pipe and reviewing the situation, but I could only see one way out of my difficulties. My debts were so large that I could never hope to pay them unaided, and where was that aid to come from? Not from my father, who had no money to spare. The Irish property of Kilproctor, from which the chief title of our house is derived, is situated in a particularly lawless corner of the country, the inhabitants of which always had a rooted objection to paying anybody, and latterly under the Land League they have evaded their legal obligations in the most shameless manner, so that most of them owe arrears of rent which they can never

hope—and never intend—to pay. In fact the Kilproctor estates might as well be in Spain as in Ireland, for all the money my father gets out of them. No, it was useless to appeal to him, and equally so to apply to Cumberground, who was in debt himself. Obviously there was only one course to pursue: I should have to marry money.

But it was necessary first to catch my heiress. Luckily I knew where to lay my hand on two who, I flattered myself, were disposed to look kindly on me. I had been acquainted with them for about a year, and I had already paid them a certain amount of attention, for the idea of a wealthy marriage had always been more or less in my mind, though I had wished to defer the evil day as long as possible. One was a Miss Merrick, the other was a Miss Slugg. Both were young and both were wealthy, without encumbrances in the shape of fathers. It is true that their fortunes had been amassed in trade; but, after all, that was a trifling drawback. The Lympet pride permitted me to spend the money which had been grubbed up by another; it merely forbade me to spoil my fingers in grubbing it up for myself. The deceased Merrick and the deceased Slugg had grubbed to some purpose in their time, and their daughters were undoubted "catches." Which should I strive to land? Miss Merrick was much the prettier of the two, but she was also the elder, and had more knowledge of the world, more suitors, and a better idea of her own value. I could see that she would require skilful handling, and perhaps more time than I had at my disposal. Miss Slugg, on the other hand, was very romantic, rather shy, and not particularly clever. She was not yet of age, and she had seen little of society of any sort. Her father dying soon after she left school, she had not entered the world till she was twenty; and her aunt, with whom she lived, had no very grand acquaintances. My rank was likely to stand me in better stead with her than with Miss Merrick, who had more than one eldest son hovering in her train. Above all, Miss Slugg possessed one hundred thousand pounds, and Miss Merrick only eighty thousand. That settled it. As I had made up my mind to dispose of a share in the Lympet name, it was my obvious duty to get the highest available price for it. My honourable pride would not allow me to depreciate its value by

taking eighty thousand pounds when I could get a hundred. And so I decided on Miss Slugg.

I need not dwell upon my courtship, the course of which was as smooth and untroubled as a canal's. It was also about as dull. For three months it flowed placidly on, and then I proposed and was accepted. But we kept our engagement secret, and I even persuaded Miss Slugg to consent to a private marriage. She had wondered at my request, and had made a few slight objections at first, but the idea soon recommended itself to her. It would be so romantic, she declared. My reasons were not romantic, however. To be frank, I had seen too many marriages spoilt by the meddling interference of lawyers and guardians to risk inviting it in my own case. When Law comes in at the door Love flies out at the window; sometimes it is even kicked out. I did not want any settlements made which might interfere with my settlement with my creditors and my own settlement in life. Nor did I care to expose my most private affairs to the prying gaze of an impertinent vulgarian. I refer to Miss Slugg's uncle, her father's younger brother. The two Sluggs had made their money together in some way connected with tallow—I have never cared to enter into the revolting details—and I knew that he would be unwilling to let the fortune, which he had helped to make, pass entirely out of the family; for he had a cub of a son whom he hoped to see married to the heiress. I might count upon his opposition as certain, and my debts were heavy enough to make an excellent weapon in his hands. Perhaps he might at least persuade his niece to wait a little, and I could not afford to wait even a few months. My fortunes were desperate; the vultures were already circling round my head. And so I had determined on a private marriage, and had induced Miss Slugg to consent to it.

Our arrangements were simple enough. On the morning after her twenty-first birthday, Miss Slugg would leave her uncle's house quietly, and repair to a church a few streets off, where Belinda, only daughter of the late Oliver Slugg, Esquire, would be united to the Honourable George Lympet, second son of the Earl of Kilproctor. No cards. After the ceremony the happy pair would proceed to the residence of the bride's uncle and receive his congratulations on the auspicious event, prior to starting on their honeymoon. Thus all the loathsome

preliminaries would be avoided, the sordid inquisition into ways and means, the distressing family dissensions, the degrading precautionary measure of settlements. On the whole it was a clever little plan, and one which, I venture to think, reflects no small credit on me.

But I was too true a Lympet to take such a serious step without first seeking the sanction of the head of our house. Three days before the date fixed for our wedding I left London, and travelled down to Rockborough Towers to beg my father's blessing and borrow a little money, which was of even more importance to me. The blessing was a luxury, but the money was a necessity. I had the marriage expenses and the cost of the honeymoon to provide for. I felt—perhaps I was over-scrupulous—that it would not be right to begin drawing on my wife's resources during a period supposed to be dedicated to romance; that it was too early to commence the serious business of life. Therefore I had decided to ask my father for a loan, hoping that, when he perceived I was about to attain an honourable independence, and was never likely to trouble him again, he would make me a present of the sum required. And as the event showed, I was not mistaken.

It was after dinner, when my sisters had left us together over our wine, that I made my confession, and informed my father that I was about to marry Miss Slugg, the charming young heiress. He did not receive the news with any enthusiasm.

"Slugg!" he said, raising his eyebrows. "What a horrible name! How on earth did you manage to become acquainted with this young person who has the misfortune to be called Slugg!"

"It is her misfortune, as you say, sir," I replied evasively, "but not her fault. Think how terrible it must be to have to answer to the name of Slugg, and pity her."

"Of course I pity her," he said quietly, "but I really do not think I could bring myself to know any one called—Slugg. Pah!"

"I do not ask you to, sir," I returned. "I do not wish you to receive Miss Slugg, but Mrs. Lympet. By marriage she will be justly entitled to a name that kings might envy."

"Exactly. And you propose to bestow this kingly name upon a Slugg. Really, old Simon, first Earl, would turn in his grave could he hear you."

"Judging by our revered ancestor's conduct in life," I remarked drily, "he would be only too willing to turn in his grave were anything to be gained by it. In this matter I am acting as he would do were he in my place."

"Indeed!" said my father, looking reassured. "It is not a foolish love affair, then!"

"I am not so much in love as to have forgotten prudence. Love is said to be blind; my eyes are open."

"And this Miss Slugg is really a prize worth winning!"

"She has a heart of gold!"

My father's face fell considerably.

"And," I continued, "she has a hundred thousand pounds."

My father brightened up at once.

"Her parents are dead, and she has no brothers or sisters."

My father began to smile pleasantly.

"Her only relatives are her uncle and his family, with whom I mean to quarrel on our wedding day."

My father rubbed his hands together, and the smile broadened into benevolence.

"Thus," I concluded, "we will soon be able to forget that she ever was a Slugg."

"Your sisters will never let her forget it," observed my father. "Still, it is a comfort to reflect that we will not be continually reminded of the fact by the intrusion of impossible relatives bearing that most impossible of names. On the whole, you might have done much worse. A hundred thousand pounds, you say? Certainly the pill is well gilded."

"And pills are only unpleasant when they are kept in the mouth too long," I added. "But the name of Slugg need never be in our mouths again after the marriage ceremony."

"True, true," replied my father; "and certainly the sooner we forget it the better. The young lady should really be greatly obliged to you. Slugg! Ha, ha! I wonder how it feels to be called Slugg."

"I wonder," I said; and then we both laughed very heartily.

After that I had no more trouble. Before we left the dining-room I had obtained his consent and a substantial cheque as a wedding present; and, possessed of his blessing and signature, I returned to London next day.

The following morning Belinda and I were united. Everything went off without

a hitch, exactly as we had planned it; and before the maiden had been missed from her uncle's house, the wife had returned with her husband to announce the great news in person. Mr. Slugg was in his study when we arrived, and thither at once I repaired "to beard the lion in his den," while my wife sought the morning-room to make her peace with her aunt. For my own part, I was intent on war. I did not wish to be "on terms" with my wife's relations, I wanted to forget the very name of Slugg, and I hoped that in his rage and disappointment, Belinda's uncle might use words so cutting as to sever completely all ties between us. Mr. Slugg showed more self-control than I had expected, however, for he received what must have been most unwelcome news with remarkable composure. He bowed to the inevitable—and with more politeness than I had thought him capable of. Being a business man, he probably looked at the matter from a business point of view. The mischief was done, and all he could say would not undo it; the strongest language in his vocabulary would be of no avail against the few words spoken by the clergyman a short half-hour before, and so he saved his breath. Nevertheless, he surveyed me with a very evil smile, and there was a sad lack of sincerity about the tone in which he wished me joy.

"But what of Belinda?" he concluded. "Surely I ought to be amongst the first to congratulate her on becoming Mrs. Slugg!"

He laid a peculiar emphasis on the word Slugg, which at once attracted my attention.

"Pardon me," I interrupted; "it was a slip of the tongue, no doubt, but you have called my wife by a name which does not now belong to her. Your niece is no longer a Slugg, she has become a Lympet. No one whose privilege it is to be called Lympet would like to be called S—anything else."

"Am I to understand," he cried eagerly, "that Belinda abandons the name of Slugg?"

"Does it seem so strange?" I enquired. "I have always supposed that it was customary for a wife to adopt her husband's name when she married."

"It is the rule," replied Mr. Slugg slowly, "but there are exceptions. Husbands have been known to take their wives' names—for a consideration."

"I would have you know, sir," I re-

torted angrily, "that no Lympet would barter his name away for any consideration whatsoever!"

"A noble sentiment!" cried Mr. Slugg joyfully, looking like a miser who had just found s'pence. "A noble sentiment! You are right, sir. What is a paltry hundred thousand pounds compared to a name so ancient and so honourable?"

A hundred thousand pounds! That was the exact amount of Belinda's fortune. What did the man mean by such a pointed reference to it?

"And I am ashamed to say I took you for a fortune-hunter!" he continued excitedly. "You—you who kick the dross away and say in effect: 'Let me keep the honoured name of Lympet, I care not who has the fortune!'"

"Excuse me," I broke in hastily, "but if you're talking about my wife's fortune, I do care very much who has it. Hang it all, there's no mistake about that, is there?"

"Surely, Mr. Lympet," said Mr. Slugg, calming down and beginning to look very anxious, "you are aware of the provisions of my brother's will? You must be. You discard the name of Slugg with your eyes open, is it not so? You know the consequences and are prepared to accept them? You would not change the noble name of Lympet for thrice my niece's fortune? Of course not! 'Not for any consideration whatsoever.' I heard you say so."

At his words a cold shiver ran down my back. I knew nothing about the deceased Slugg's will. My information concerning Belinda's fortune had come to me on most excellent authority, and she herself had told me that she was at liberty to marry whom she pleased after her twenty-first birthday, but of the provisions of the will under which she inherited I was ignorant.

Somehow I had never thought of driving down to Somerset House and inspecting the document. It was an oversight, and I began to fear a very serious one.

"Look here, Mr. Slugg," I said, with a ghastly attempt at jocularity, "we'll discuss those provisions, if you please. They're the proper food for a wedding breakfast."

"You know nothing about the will after all, then?" enquired Mr. Slugg coldly. "I might have guessed it!"

"Of course I know nothing, except that under it my wife inherits a considerable fortune."

"On conditions," murmured Mr. Slugg gently.

"Conditions!" I echoed, shifting uneasily in my seat. "And, pray, what are they? Nothing extravagant, nothing unreasonable, I trust?"

"They seem to me to be reasonable enough; but then," he added with a sneer, "I'm not a Lympet."

"If they're reasonable, I'll comply with them," I said shortly. "I'm not a fool."

"I think I've a copy somewhere," observed Mr. Slugg, rummaging in his drawers. "My brother was a very peculiar man, Mr. Lympet. He had risen from nothing, and he was proud of it. He was also proud of his name, and rightly so, for it was—ay, and still is!—a power in the tallow-candle line. It was his chief regret that he had not a son to inherit his fame. It pained him to think that on his daughter's marriage the name of Slugg would no longer be associated with the fortune he had made, that it would soon be forgotten the money came from a Slugg, and that his grandchildren might pass their lives in ease, and yet be ignorant of the very source from which their portions came. All this, I say, pained him. He looked upon himself as the founder of a family——"

"Monstrous!" I ejaculated, "monstrous!"

"And he did not want his descendants to forget their obligations. His best plan would have been to leave his money to his daughter on condition she married her cousin, who some day will be head of the House he helped to found, but he did not want to fetter her choice. I think he was mistaken, but let that pass. We are considering what he actually did, not what he ought to have done. To be brief, after sundry legacies, he left his fortune to his daughter on these conditions: if she married, her husband was to take the name of Slugg, or the money passed to her next-of-kin, save an allowance of five hundred a year for life——"

"What!" I yelled, starting to my feet.

"Moreover," he continued, paying no attention to my outburst, "she cannot touch her capital. The full income is hers for life, but, had she died unmarried, it would have passed to our side of the family, as it will do should she die without issue. Of course, any children she may have will inherit the whole fortune at her death, but they must keep the name of Slugg."

"I don't believe it!" I stammered, sinking back into my chair.

"Here is the copy," he replied, handing it to me. "You'll find it all there, though possibly not in such plain English."

Alas! it was too true. Amidst all the tangle of verblage one fact stood distinctly out: the husband of Belinda would have to adopt her name or forfeit her fortune. What was I to do? Abandon the name of *Lympet* which I loved, and assume the name of *Slugg* which I loathed? Impossible! Yet what was the alternative? Ganteel poverty. My pride pulled one way, my prudence the other; and prudence won. I had my wife to think of. I could not rob her of her fortune and drag her down from affluence to indigence for a mere sentiment, however noble. For her sake I resolved to subdue my pride and sacrifice my name. To parody Gibbon, I sighed as a *Lympet*, I obeyed as a husband. "After all," I concluded, not knowing that I spoke aloud, "by the aid of a hyphen it may be made endurable. *Lympet-Slugg*! It is at least uncommon."

"If you look on the other page," broke in an unsympathetic voice, "you will see a clause which provides for any such attempt at evasion. In it the testator declares that he will have no tampering with the fine old Anglo-Saxon name of *Slugg*, that he will not have it linked to a hyphen, and converted into a hybrid compound. The plain old-fashioned name of *Slugg* must not be spoilt by any unnecessary additions. My brother loved his name, you see, sir, and, as I told you, was uncommonly proud of it."

"Confound his pride!" I cried, throwing down the will and stamping on it.

"Come, come," said Mr. *Slugg*, "you need not give way so. You are not compelled to take our name. Of course you mean to refuse! 'No one whose privilege it is to be called *Lympet* would like to be called anything else!'"

Had I been wavering, the man's gibes would have decided me. By accepting the name of *Slugg*, I kept his hands from the fortune for which they were itching; and this knowledge considerably lessened the pain my decision cost me.

"That will do," I said coldly. "I think there is nothing to detain us here longer. Let us go upstairs. No doubt you are anxious to congratulate your niece, Mrs.—Mrs. *Slugg*!"

And that is how I came to be called *Slugg*. Ah, if I had known the contents of that abominable will when I made my choice between Miss *Merrick* and Miss

Slugg, I would certainly have chosen Miss *Merrick*. It would have cost me twenty thousand pounds, but the name of *Lympet* was well worth the sacrifice. As it is, I have won a fortune, but I have got to go through life ticketed with the price I paid for it. Nor is that all. I have children, but I can take little interest in them, for they are not *Lympets*, but *Sluggs*. My father is much annoyed with me, and can hardly bring himself to recognise a *Slugg* as a member of the family; Cumberground chaffs me unmercifully, and my sisters call my wife "that creature," and compare me to Esau. But perhaps my greatest cross is the prosperity of the *Slugg* candle business, which has become a tremendous concern. The hated name flames on every hoarding, flaunts on the backs of novels and magazines, and has become familiar to every ear. And strangers and casual acquaintances will persist in mistaking me for a member of the firm! More than once I have overheard people describing me as, "*Slugg*, the candleman, you know," in perfectly audible "asides." Even my friends do not spare me, for they have bestowed on me a nickname which, recalling as it does all I have lost, costs me a pang every time I hear it. They call me the late Mr. *Lympet*.

A WITTY WOMAN.

THERE can be no doubt that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is entitled to a foremost place among witty women. You may suggest that she was at times indelicate; you may credit all the malignant calumnies against her circulated by Horace Walpole, who naturally hated a woman as clever as himself, and whose wounded vanity made him an unscrupulous enemy; you may "aspersæ her parts of speech"; but you can't deny that she was witty. She began very early. She had not long been married when we find her writing to her husband—Edward Wortley Montagu, Esq.—with polished smartness and a pretty epigrammatical turn of phrase:

"If it were possible to restore liberty to your country, or limit the encroachment of the prerogative, by reducing yourself to a garret, I should be pleased to share so glorious a poverty with you; but, as the world is and will be, 'tis a sort of duty to be rich, that it may be in one's power to do good; riches being another word for

power, towards the obtaining of which the first necessary qualification is impudence, and—as Demosthenessaid of pronunciation, in oratory—the second is impudence, and the third, still impudence. . . The Ministry is like a play at Court; there's a little door to get in at, and a great crowd without, shoving and thrusting who shall be foremost; people who knock others with their elbows, disregard a little kick of the shins, and still thrust heartily forwards, are sure of a good place. Your modest man stands behind in the crowd, is shoved about by everybody, his clothes torn, almost squeezed to death, and sees a thousand get in before him that don't make so good a figure as himself."

Lady Mary was only twenty-six when she wrote with all this point and facility.

At a later date we find her describing with but a few graphic touches her experiences of a stormy passage across the Channel.

"It is hard to imagine oneself," she says, "in a scene of greater horror than on such an occasion, and yet—shall I own it to you?—though I was not at all willing to be drowned, I could not forbear being entertained at the double distress of a fellow-passenger. She was an English lady that I had met at Calais, who desired me to let her go over with me in my cabin. She had brought a fine point-head, which she was striving to conceal from the Custom House officer. When the wind grew high, and our little vessel cracked, she fell heartily to her prayers, and thought wholly of her soul. When it seemed to abate, she returned to the worldly care of her head-dress, and addressed herself to me: 'Dear madam, will you take care of this point? If it should be lost! Oh, Lord, we shall all be lost! Lord have mercy on my soul! Pray, madam, take care of this head-dress!' This easy transition from her soul to her head-dress, and the alternate agonies that both gave her, made it hard to determine which she thought of greatest value."

After a Continental tour, Lady Mary, in October, 1718, at the age of twenty-eight, took her place in London society as one of its fashionable leaders and most brilliant ornaments. Still in the ripe bloom of womanhood, she dazzled by her personal charms, and could fascinate by the magic of her smile or a glance from her beautiful eyes. Her accomplishments were various; her manners graceful, though assured, and free from the "gêne" that so often em-

barrasses the untravelled Englishwoman; and her conversation was charming in its wit and range and depth, for she had read much and seen much, and was gifted with a rare faculty of expression. That such a woman attracted a crowd of admirers is no more a wonder than that such a woman did not object to their admiration, even while she despised it.

Soon after her return, Lady Mary took up her residence at Twickenham, in the immediate neighbourhood of Pope, his villa, his garden, and his grotto. A frequent visitor was Lord Hervey, the wit and fine gentleman, whose gifts of intellect have almost been forgotten in the obloquy heaped upon him by the malice of the little satirist. So clever a man was necessarily drawn towards so clever a woman, and they became fast friends. Lord Hervey dying in the prime of manhood, after Lady Mary had settled abroad, his eldest son sealed up her letters and returned them with an assurance that he had not opened or read them. In reply she acknowledged his honourable conduct, adding that she could almost regret he had not glanced his eye over a correspondence which would have shown him what so young a man might, perhaps, be inclined to doubt—the possibility of a long and steadfast friendship being maintained, without any admixture of love, between two persons of different sexes. I do not know why this assertion should not be believed. The scandal levelled at Lady Mary in this case, as in other cases, originated in the inventions of her notorious enemies, Horace Walpole and Pope. That she wrote with a good deal of freedom in her letters, and permitted a good deal of freedom on the part of her correspondents, will not be construed as a proof of improper conduct by any person who, in the first place, has studied the idiosyncrasies of her character, and, in the second, has made himself acquainted with the license of language that in those days prevailed among the most virtuous gentlewomen. Conscious of her powers of wit and ridicule, she used them too profusely; sparing not her friend nor foe; converting friends into foes, and rendering foes more bitter; laughing at everybody and everything; and sowing enmities around her broadcast. While not defending her occasional coarseness and irreverence—there are things which it is not seemly to jest about or even to write about—I am persuaded she was innocent of all graver errors. Digitized by Google

In the quarrel between Pope and Lady Mary, the former unquestionably carries off most of the blame and all the disgrace. The valetudinarian little poet was probably sincere in his passion for the accomplished beauty; was dazzled by her personal and intellectual graces into as strong an attachment as was possible to his selfish temper. This is also Leigh Hunt's opinion; but then such an attachment involves a severe condemnation on his conduct in forgetting, or pretending to forget, that she was a wife and a mother. She was wrong in permitting his addresses; but the truth is, she laughed at them. They pleased her natural woman's vanity, and at the same time gratified her sense of humour. It was certain from the first that they would not know each other long without quarrelling. The poet demanded an amount of flattery and submission which she was the last woman in the world to concede. I suspect that the poet found she was amusing herself with the extravagance of his devotion; but Lady Mary's own statement is, that at some inopportune moment when she least expected what young ladies call "a declaration," he made such passionate love to her that, in spite of her utmost endeavour to be angry and preserve her gravity, she broke out into a fit of immoderate laughter. Thenceforward wounded vanity made him her implacable enemy; and he spared no effort to send her name down to posterity besmirched with the filth of his scandal. In the heyday of his infatuation he had celebrated her under the name of Sappho with all the resources of his panegyric. Now he brought all the resources of his hatred to effect her degradation. His first attack was made in the third epistle of his "Moral Essays":

Rufa, whose eye quick glancing o'er the park,
Attracts each light gay meteor of a spark,
Agrees as ill with Rufa studying Locke,
As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock;
Or Sappho at her toilet's greasy task
With Sappho fragrant at an evening masque,
So morning insects that in muck begun
Shine, buzz, and fly-blow in the setting sun.

This was coarse, but coarser still was a couplet which he introduced into his "Imitations of Horace": so coarse that I dare not quote it—so coarse that Pope himself had the grace to feel ashamed, and stammered out a denial that it was intended to apply to Lady Mary.

About the same time our splenetic little poet spouted some of his poisonous ink on Lord Hervey, who retorted in certain contemptuous "Verses addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of

the Second Book of Horace." These, which are more bitter than witty, are included in Lady Mary's works, though she always repudiated their authorship. They exhibit few traces of the vivacity of her style; but she may probably have inserted a couplet here and there. Pope replied in the splendidly venomous "Epistle to Arbuthnot," in which Lord Hervey's portrait is sketched under that of Sporus with a vitriolic intensity of hate. Lady Mary was not brought within the range of this attack, but Pope continued to gird at her in his letters and conversation until she left England in 1739.

This act of separation from her husband, and self-banishment from the circles where she had reigned supreme, set the tongues of hundred-headed Scandal wagging lustily. Yet it was a simple enough matter after all. Witty women do not as a rule make friends; witty women who are not only witty but fearless, and not only fearless but unconventional, do not make friends but multiply enemies; and I incline to believe that Lady Mary had rendered London society exceedingly uncomfortable for herself and others. Further, she was weary of the old scenes and the old faces; she was weary of fashionable life; and so she left it all. Her husband and herself had always lived upon friendly terms, but with a certain amount of detachment; and being some years older than his wife, he resolved on sticking to his home-comforts instead of following her erratic steps. They corresponded regularly, and of the value of his wife's letters he showed his conviction by the care he took of them.

There was really nothing more at the bottom of it all than this. The suggestion that the separation was at Mr. Montagu's instance, and was due to his disgust with her irregularities, is absolutely without a single corroborative fact; and would never have taken shape but for the firm conviction of a certain order of minds that a witty woman necessarily carries out the alliteration, and is also a wicked woman. "Rumours," said Mrs. Oliphant, "are poor things to hold up before us at a distance of a hundred and thirty years; and even Horace Walpole, even Pope, have nothing but vague irritation to vent against Lady Mary. And Mr. Wortley's letters, after his wife's departure, give us for the first time a certain friendliness for the heavy man, who is glad of her comfort in his composed way, and trusts her in

their common concerns, and cares for her health and well-being. The two would seem after their stormy beginning to have grown into a certain friendship with the years. Perhaps he meant to join her, as several of his letters imply; or perhaps he permitted her to believe that he meant to join her; or perhaps it was held vaguely possible, as a thing that might or might not be, indifferent to the world, not over interesting even to themselves."

So Lady Mary departed, and stayed on the Continent for two-and-twenty years; and all that time the witty woman wrote home to her husband, her daughter, and her friends the most charming letters—letters which are scarcely inferior to those of Madame de Sévigné, for if they are inferior in grace they surpass in vivacity—letters full of happy descriptions and shrewd reflections, the letters of a woman who has seen much and observed much, and knows how to convey to others the results of her experience with graphic force and lucidity.

I could quote many passages in justification of my styling her a witty woman, but I prefer to make an extract which will show her to have been, a century and a half ago, a strenuous advocate for the higher education of women.

"There is no part of the world where our sex is treated with so much contempt as in England. I do not complain of men for having engrossed the government; in excluding us from all degrees of power, they preserve us from many fatigues, many dangers, and, perhaps, many crimes. But I think it the highest injustice to be debarred the entertainment of my closet, and that the same studies which raise the character of a man should hurt that of a woman. We are educated in the grossest ignorance, and no art omitted to stifle our natural reason; if some few get above their nurses' instructions, our knowledge must rest concealed, and be as useless to the world as gold in the mine. It appears to me the strongest proof of a clear understanding in Longinus—in every light acknowledged one of the greatest men among the ancients—when I find him so far superior to vulgar prejudices, as to choose his two examples of fine writing from a Jew—at that time the most despised people upon earth—and a woman. Our modern wits would be so far from quoting, they would scarce own they had read the works of such contemptible creatures, though, perhaps, they would

condescend to steal from them, at the same time they declared they were below their notice."

MISS GARTH.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

MISS GARTH of Boraston Hall was six-and-twenty years of age.

People had almost given up wondering why a woman, young, handsome, rich, and so entirely her own mistress, had not given Boraston Hall a master long ago. Only Jocelyn Garth herself could have told why she remained unmarried, but she was silent on the subject, and she was not a woman whom the impertinent dare question.

In person she was tall and very fair. Her figure was graceful and delicately rounded. Her eyes were very still, and grey, and tranquil, like the waters of a lake; and they were surmounted by eyebrows that were almost black, and fringed with deep lashes that lay dark against her delicate cheek.

She had no companion and no chaperon to keep her company in the old Hall in which she dwelt. She depended entirely for society on a small slip of a golden-haired child whom she had adopted years ago. The little girl, a perfect fairy in grace and prettiness, was the daughter of a cousin who had died abroad, and who had sent home the orphan to the tender care of Jocelyn Garth.

But although she cared for no other companionship but that of the child, she was by no means a hermit. She went to dances and dinners, and gave dances and dinners in return. None could call her unsociable, but many deemed her quiet and uninteresting. People sought eagerly for invitations to Boraston Hall nevertheless. Miss Garth was well known to be exclusive to fastidiousness, and to be asked to one of her dinners or balls stamped one with an aristocratic stamp at once.

Jocelyn was considered in all respects to be a most fortunate woman. She had a positively princely income, the most unexceptionable relations, and a charming old house to live in. Jocelyn kept up the old place in magnificent style. There were antique treasures in some of the rooms that money could not buy.

Every Christmas Jocelyn had a large house-party to which she invited her most intimate friends and relations. The in-

imate friends were few, and the unexceptionable relations were many. Jocelyn made a perfect hostess, and was equally gracious to all. She was never known to make a confidence. Her relations called her "unsympathetic." Their aristocratic breeding would not allow them to go further than that.

The time was drawing near for Jocelyn to assemble her house-party. She sat in her luxurious boudoir writing the usual notes to the usual people, with a troubled expression in her eyes that sometimes crept into them when she was alone.

There would be no refusals, she knew that; and the house-party would be almost precisely similar to every other house-party that she had given ever since she came of age. There would be her aunt, Lady Carstairs, to chaperon the party, together with a couple of Carstairs men and a couple of Carstairs girls. There would be four or five cousins of different sexes—more distant and a good deal poorer than the Carstairs cousins. There would be half-a-dozen people from lonely country houses thirty or forty miles away—and there would be Godfrey Wharton and his sister.

It was when writing her note to the last-named that the troubled look had stolen into Jocelyn Garth's eyes. They were the only people she really cared about amongst the many she had asked. They were also the only people she feared to see.

Jocelyn Garth was not a vain woman, but she had seen that in Godfrey Wharton's eyes once or twice that was absolutely unmistakable. She knew, just as well as if he had spoken the words, that he loved her. She had warded off, as women know how to ward off, an absolute declaration on his part. But the time was coming when she knew she could keep him at a distance no longer.

Five years ago, gossip had linked their names together. When Jocelyn attained her majority and entered into possession of vast estates, it was whispered that Miss Garth and the young Squire of Gratton Park would "make it up together." But as time went on and there was no sign of anything between the young people but friendship, gossip died away for lack of nourishment. It was undeniable that they would have made a fine couple.

The house-party began on the twenty-fourth of December and lasted over the New Year. Lady Carstairs, with two blooming daughters and two stalwart sons, was the first to arrive.

"Well, Jocelyn," she said, as she kissed her niece's cheek, "here we all are again as usual. Nothing has happened, I suppose? No exciting news to tell me?"

Lady Carstairs asked the same question each year, as a delicate insinuation to Jocelyn that it was high time she got engaged. Lady Carstairs hardly thought it was the thing for a young woman in Jocelyn's position to remain unmarried.

"I should have been very humiliated," she once remarked, "if I had reached the age of twenty-six without even being engaged. I had not a fiftieth part of Jocelyn's money, and I don't think I was so handsome. But I had 'go,' which Jocelyn has not, and it always takes with men."

She was piloted upstairs and shown her rooms by Jocelyn herself. There was a good deal of bustle and flying about as soon as she set foot in the house. For a week quiet old Boraston Hall would hardly know itself. Its dignified repose was only disturbed by such a flippant invasion once a year.

Lady Carstairs was languidly explaining why she had only brought one maid.

"At the last moment—the very last moment, my dear," she said, sinking into an arm-chair and loosening her wraps, "the girls' maid gave notice. Such impertinence! And all because I had forgotten that I had promised to let her go home at this particular time. As if this were not holiday enough! However, she has gone home for good now, and I am sure I hope she'll like it. But what are my poor girls to do, Jocelyn?"

"I will lend them Parker," said Jocelyn, smiling. "I hardly ever need her. She finds her life quite dull, and will be charmed to have the charge of two fashionable young ladies."

"So good of you," murmured Lady Carstairs, dismissing the subject comfortably at once. "I think I should like my tea up here, Jocelyn, please. I am quite worn out."

Jocelyn left the room to give her orders, and in a little while was joined by her two cousins. It was wonderful how short a time they had taken to get into elaborate tea-gowns and have their hair curled.

Jocelyn was sitting before a large log fire in the big hall. The rich oak panelling, covered with rare old china and flashing swords, gleamed, softly sombre, in the ruddy firelight. Jocelyn herself, in her white woollen gown with the silver belt, looked particularly fair and handsome against her dark surroundings. gle

"Tell us all about the people you have got," said Lucy Carstairs, as soon as she was comfortably settled with a cup of tea in her hand. "Is there anybody fresh?"

"I am afraid not," Jocelyn answered, smiling. "It is the same old set, Lucy."

"No one new at all?"

"Not one. We are slow at growing new aborigines, you know. But I can promise you a few exciting young men at the ball. I asked Lady Ellis to bring any one she chose, and she always has a train of eligibles on hand."

"Really, Jocelyn," said Rose Carstairs, "you sometimes talk as if you were a hundred, and quite past all the things that other people care about. You stand outside them, as it were."

Jocelyn did not answer. She had turned to meet Harry and Edgar, who were lounging down the stairs in velvet smoking-coats.

An hour later and the house was full. There was a great rushing about in the corridors, and calling for maids, and demanding hot water. A great laughing and questioning as to the rooms which they were to have. Merry congratulations that they had met again. A mingling of feminine voices and deep basses; a general frolicsomeness and bustle. The old house had wakened up.

Jocelyn Garth stood in the great hall, greeting with a smile on her lips the last arrival—Godfrey Wharton.

"You are late!" she said.

"I am so sorry, but I couldn't manage to come over with Kitty. You dine at eight, don't you?"

"Yes; and it is only twenty minutes to, now! We must hurry."

She mounted the stairs lightly and left him standing there with words of unspoken admiration on his lips. She always avoided being alone with him for even five minutes together. He bit his lip as he recognised that the old will-o'-the-wisp chase was to begin once more.

"But this time she shall give me an answer," he said to himself, as he followed her slowly up the stairs.

Dinner was a very merry affair that night. So many of the guests had not met since this time last year. There was so much to talk over; so many "do you remember?" interspersed with glances more or less tender; so many promising flirtations taken up again at the point at which they had been broken off twelve months ago.

Jocelyn sat at the head of the table in

white and diamonds. Lady Carstairs sat at Jocelyn's left hand, and made comments on the guests in a confidential tone.

"Nobody fresh, I see, Jocelyn! Is everybody really here?"

"Every single soul, aunt. I wish I could have collected a few new people, but there were none to collect."

"Hum—ha!" said Lady Carstairs, with her eyeglass to her eye. "Daisy Carruthers seems to have gone off a good deal since last year. I was rather afraid Edgar would take to her. No money, I believe!"

"No money; only birth, Aunt Grace," said Jocelyn in her quiet voice.

Lady Carstairs shot a quick glance at her niece. She had an idea that sometimes Jocelyn was a little sarcastic, and she did not like sarcastic women.

"Birth is all very well," she replied with dignity; "but money is absolutely necessary, nowadays. Young Wharton has grown very coarse-looking," she added, returning to her scrutiny of the guests.

She had a fancy that Jocelyn and Godfrey Wharton liked each other more than was wise. She wanted Jocelyn to marry her own son Edgar.

"Has he?" said Jocelyn, with her most imperturbable expression. "I had not observed it."

"You are so used to him, my dear. I have not seen him for a year."

Jocelyn let the subject drop. She never argued and waxed hot in discussion—which was perhaps one of the reasons why she was deemed unsympathetic.

"Those Bletherton girls dress worse than ever," said Lady Carstairs, going on with her survey. "Couldn't you hint to the fat one, Jocelyn, that magenta velvet looks awful against that yellow skin of hers? Any one can see she has been in India."

"Perhaps she doesn't know she has a yellow skin. It would be a pity to enlighten her."

"Well, well—dear me, Jocelyn, how aged Colonel Tredarth is! Poor old man! It is quite pitiable to see him."

"He has only left off dyeing his hair, aunt. That is really the only difference."

"My dear, how cynical you are! I should not like to say that about one of my relations," said Lady Carstairs with virtuous indignation, and a consciousness that her own hair was not entirely innocent of liquid assistance. "I believe the poor creature's hair has grown white from grief. He never recovered his son's going off in that extraordinary way." ogle

"That was ten years ago."

"Sorrow tells slowly on some people," said Lady Carstairs with a sigh. "It was years before I realised what a blow poor John's death was to me."

"John" was her husband.

Jocelyn was silent again. She had none of the fluent stock remarks people usually utter on such occasions. She now turned her attention to her right-hand neighbour—an elderly bachelor, also a cousin, who had taken her in to dinner.

"I hope you have not forgotten how to skate, Cousin Arthur?" she remarked. "We are going to have all sorts of festivities on the ice, and I shall need you to look after me."

"You ought to have a younger man to look after you," said the lean cousin. "I expect I shall be quite out of the running. You forget that I am a fossil, Jocelyn."

Perhaps she did not forget this fact oftener than he did himself. At fifty-five he still considered himself a gay young boy.

"And there is the ball, too," continued Jocelyn, "and a dinner-party, and my New Year's Eve ghostly séance. I shall expect you to be at the front in everything."

"I will obey any commands from lips so fair," said the elderly cousin, with clumsy gallantry.

Jocelyn gave the signal to rise at that moment, and the ladies swept from the room, the magenta velvet in close juxtaposition to an exquisite yellow gown from Worth. Lady Carstairs declared afterwards that it made her very bones ache to look at them.

There was playing and singing after dinner, and by-and-by, when the men came in, a good deal of mild flirtation. Lady Carstairs drew Jocelyn's attention to the fact that her cousin Edgar was the finest man in the room.

Miss Garth gave a glance in the direction of the six feet of masculine beauty which was now engaged in absently gazing at its patent-leather toes.

"Very good-looking," she said briefly.

"He is considered the handsomest man about town," said Lady Carstairs, a little ruffled at Jocelyn's indifference.

"Is he? That is very nice."

Jocelyn spoke as though she were thinking of something else. Lady Carstairs

asked her sharply what she was watching the door like that for?

She coloured a little for the first time.

"I was wondering why Aveline did not come in. I told her she might stop up to see you all. Ah, here she is!"

The door opened and a dainty little figure, all white muslin and blue ribbons and golden hair, came in. She went straight to Jocelyn and nestled up to her. Miss Garth kissed the little face with a depth, almost a passion, of tenderness.

"You are as fond of that child as ever," remarked Lady Carstairs disapprovingly, as she gave a cold peck at the rose-flushed cheeks. "And spoil her more, no doubt. She should never have been allowed to sit up till this time."

"She would not have slept if I had put her to bed," said Jocelyn apologetically.

Lady Carstairs grunted—if such a plebeian expression may be used of such an aristocratic personage.

"You will repent pampering her like this. Some day she will have to get her own living."

She was watching little Aveline's progress round the room with a smile on her face. All the men were petting and teasing her, and all the ladies were lavish- ing endearing epithets upon her.

But Aveline was a little person of decision and discrimination. She put aside with a firm hand the dazzling attentions that were offered her, and made straight for Godfrey Wharton, who was the only person in the room who had taken no notice of her.

She climbed up into his arms and laid her head on his shoulder, with a nestling gesture that was almost the same as she used to Jocelyn.

Godfrey Wharton bent his head and kissed her softly. Above the little golden head, across the whole length of the room, his eyes met Jocelyn Garth's.

The look in itself was a caress. She felt as though, in the presence of all, he had kissed her lips instead of the child's.

She blushed crimson, and hastily turned away her head. Lady Carstairs, who had succeeded in planting Edgar by his cousin's side, put down the blush to the admiring glance that the young man had given her.

And she went to bed in high good-humour.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "*Joan Vellacott*," "*A Woman of Forty*," "*Kestell of Greystone*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI. LOOKING FORWARD.

If you follow the Rothery through the glen by the small path on its left bank, you ascend all the way under the shade of great firs, larches, oaks, and birch. Here and there, through the leafy rifts, the sky shows large patches of blue and white. This glen is the roosting-place of the rooks, and their evening chorus mingles with the roar of the Rothery, the river protesting against any rival sound. In the evening the moths flit about like ghosts of butterflies, and foolishly brush against the sleeping birds. Nature here is wild and lonely, but very beautiful to those whose eyes have been trained to see beauty everywhere.

Penelope Winskell was walking slowly up the glen one evening, ten days after her conversation with the Duke of Greybarrow. She held a letter in her hand, and her free, elastic step quickly got over the distance that separates the Palace from the head of the glen. There was a smile on her face and a new light in her eyes, though every now and then she looked regretfully at the beloved glen, as if she were begging for its forgiveness.

The path ends at a wicket gate, and suddenly one emerges upon a great sweep of bare hillside. On the left lies a long valley, whose winding path you can trace for several miles, and which eventually leads across a mountain pass to Steepside. On the right a great mountain spur fronts

you, with a valley on either side of it. From the wicket gate the long ascent of the high Highfell could be seen, though the real summit was not visible till one had walked for more than two hours up the narrow path.

Penelope loved this view. Here she could watch the clouds as the huge masses swept across the hills and vales, or sank suddenly to enfold a lonely crest in their white arms. She had always known it, and yet there was ever something new in the scene, always something wild and grand which harmonised with her thoughts. There was so much power in those sweeping clouds and in the mountain-tops to resist the opposing force. Force against force. She was young and strong herself, eager to fight destiny in the shape of the slow ruin that was gradually overwhelming the old family, whose glory was its free lands from times immemorial.

To-day she walked some way up the mountain-side, not pausing till she reached a small clump of firs near to which a tiny stream gurgled and tumbled in its narrow bed, mimicking the greater glory of the Rothery. Penelope, selecting a grey boulder, sat down to think. Just beneath her was a reach of quiet shallows, where the stream flowed silently, and where the girl could see her own reflection intercepting the blue of heaven. Like many another girl, as she sat dreaming by the water she thought of love. Love was a power she was only just beginning to understand. She did not even know why it presented itself to her now, when only last year she had been quite contented with dreams of visionary glory. She had grown up without knowing for many years that her life was dull. Her uncle had till now so much filled her life with

employment, that she had missed nothing else. He had taught her that a Princess of Rothery must be quite unlike other girls, and she had easily imbibed these ideas of pride, which even in the best of mortals need but little fostering. Presently she unfolded a letter she held, and read it again :

"DEAREST PRINCESS,—I have been here a week and I have been working hard for you all the time. I have looked up old friends of my youth, and I have been searching for a small house in a good situation. You know that our small means have been the chief difficulty for the maturing of our plans. I think I have seen a way out of this, and I believe I have found a suitable abode. A widow lady wishes to let her house to careful people for a very small sum of money. The house is charming, and is in a good situation, which is half the battle in this strange world of London and the stranger power which calls itself 'Society.' Once I was well acquainted with all its ways, but alas ! I have long ceased to be familiar with its haunts.

"You must come when I send for you. I am looking for a lady who will act as chaperon, for society must have no fault to find with you. The rest you must leave to me. You have but to obey. Then, Princess, make up your mind to enjoy all these gaieties. Society likes those who can enjoy its good things. I fear at times I have made you too grave, but your nature is strong. I am writing to your father, and I am sure he will make no objection. In a week all will be ready for you. As to your toilet, leave that till you come. Your chaperon must see that all is as it should be. You are always beautiful, child, but for once you must do as others do.

"I can hear the music of the Rothery even here, but how long will that music last if we do not bestir ourselves!—Your devoted Uncle, "GREYBARROW."

Penelope read and re-read the letter with a smile on her lips. She felt that she was quite ready to do her uncle's bidding. She must obey, but suddenly also she felt she could love. She would learn to love the husband of her uncle's choice. Princesses need not be unhappy because they were not free, like vulgar persons, to choose their husbands. They could love one worthy of them, and then

life would be a beautiful thing. She looked again into the pool and smiled. Penelope did not know that she was very like the pictures of Mrs. Siddons, because she had never seen any of them, but her smile pleased her, and her own beauty was a source of pleasure. She smiled as she thought of the man who should come to Rothery as her husband. Some day they would sit on this very stone, and she would tell him what had been her imaginary picture of him.

"He will be tall and handsome. He will have dark eyes and dark hair. He will love our dear home as much as I love it myself, and he and uncle will be companions for each other. We shall enjoy long walks together, and sometimes he will take me to London to see the world. I want to see the world for a little while, but I must always live here."

At this moment a dog came bounding out of the copse, and jumped upon her.

"Oh, Nero, you here. Don't bark, but lie down. Jim Oldcorn must be close by."

Jim was sauntering along with a broad grin upon his face.

"It's a foin neet, Princess, and when Nero see yer he wadn't cum doon again for my calling."

"Where's the King, Jim? Is he out this evening?"

"He's doon by the green bushes. Gilt doon, yer silly oald daft Nero! Lenk an' see what wark ye've been makkin' on the laddy's gown. D'ye nat think it's a thousan' shams to ye?"

"Never mind, Nero. I'll go and speak to my father."

The King was not far behind his constant companion. He stepped out from the trees and stood beside his daughter. Perhaps he, too, was aware of the contrast between himself and the beautiful girl.

"D——n it, girl, you look like the ghost sitting here."

"I wanted to see you," said Penelope, taking no notice of the oath, and, indeed, the King's language was never choice. "I have heard from uncle, and he says he has written to you about my going to London."

"So he has. His crazy letter is here somewhere. Who's to pay the score, I should like to know?"

Penelope stood up and put her hand on the King's greasy coat.

"If you believed in me, father, it would be easier. You know that I can do more for the old home than any one else."

"You're a girl, and what's the use of girls?"

"They can marry those who can redeem land with their money."

The King looked a few minutes at the child he cared for so little, because she was a girl, and because she was so different to himself.

"A girl makes a mess of everything. Your uncle has filled your head with rubbish. You're pretty enough and proud enough to please the devil, but it isn't pride that finds a husband who will unloose his purse strings; besides, who wants a stranger here?"

"I shall find him," said Penelope, stamping her foot angrily, and loosening her father's arm. "Uncle believes in me, and he knows I can do it."

"Let me see the bond—and the man who signs it won't sign it for nothing."

Penelope raised her head.

"Am I nothing?"

"You're well enough as far as looks go, Penzie, but a husband will want none of your high and mighty pride. You'll make a mull of it as did your great-aunt, and Greybarrow will repent when it is too late. It's Davy and myself as will save the estate. We don't want a meddling girl to teach us."

"Father!" said Penelope, with a world of reproach in her tone. "Father! you know that unless something is done at once——"

The King of Rothery shook himself free of his daughter with an oath and walked off to join Oldcorn, who was searching for some lost sheep. Some neighbouring rascals had been counterfeiting his own mark on the King's ewes, and Oldcorn and he must at once bring the matter home to them. As to Penelope and her marriage, that seemed a pure chimera to him. What man would waste good gold on another man's land at the bidding of a girl? Greybarrow had always lived on dreams, and much good they had done him. Besides—if the old tale was true no gold was wanted. Ah! but was it true? The King chuckled to himself as he strode along the mountain-side.

For a long time the girl sat upon the grey stone, her proud heart swelling at her father's treatment, and hardening herself against his scorn of her. Then she rose and stood on the hillside, and crossed her arms to still the beating of her heart.

"I will do it," she said aloud. "I—I

will save the Winskells' estate, and then my father will see that a girl can accomplish more than he and his son together can do."

Then she laughed a little, the laugh of a lonely girl who means to do without the sympathy which should be hers by right.

"I will not think of myself, I will not care. If I cannot love, I will do without it. Many people live without love. My mother did."

The stars came forth upon the indescribable blue of the evening sky; the moon was bright over the clump of fir-trees; as Penelope wandered back to the dreary Palace. The Rothery seemed to speak new swelling words of pride, and she loved it now with a new love which had in it some of the fierce determination of her nature.

She climbed to her turret room, and when she had dismissed Betty, she sat a long time wondering about that future her uncle had promised her. How would the great world receive her? A certain shyness mingled with her pride. She knew so little what society meant or what it would entail upon her; she only knew that she was going to fulfil her mission, a mission not only self-imposed, but which had been given to her by her uncle, the man who had made her capable of appreciating many things, the meaning of which her brother did not even know.

She tried to read, but the words she read made no impression upon her. She could see only the big world before her, looking like a great flame, into which she must step from out the darkness of Rothery. Then from the flame also stepped forth the lover, and he took her hand, and told her that she was beautiful and that he loved her with all his heart. Penelope felt her pride melted before this new hope, and she nestled her head on the handsome knight's shoulder and felt at rest. Then suddenly it seemed that the flame died down and the knight's grasp loosened, and darkness fell upon the turret chamber, whilst the moon looked in on her solitude with a large, wondering eye.

The fabrics of a dream and of a girl's fair castles soon fade and fall low.

Then Penelope took the big Bible that had belonged to her mother and opened it, but she did not heed the words she read, for another castle was slowly rising from the ashes of the first, and the magic fabric was built up again of endless day dreams, in which girls who have been brought up in much solitude indulge naturally, not

from ambition or from love of power, but because of their innate longing to love. This love is the ideal of a pure mind, the love that means to give much devotion in return for devotion, a love where all is equal and in which nothing is disappointing. Even as she knelt to say oft-repeated words of prayer, Penelope Winkell was full of this personal devotion, full of the great youthful power to love—which seemed to satisfy her better than any religious creed.

Then suddenly she rose from her knees, and the beautiful young face settled itself into an expression which was almost hard.

"What does it matter? He must be rich and he must love me enough to save our Palace and our land. I shall be satisfied with that."

Penelope spoke ignorantly, but even her ignorance was not devoid of heroism. She accepted the sacrifice and counted the cost because she was not now required to pay. Then she looked out once more over the sleeping woods, and listened again to the low murmur of the Rothery before getting into bed. After this she fell asleep, courting more dreams from dreams, more love from love.

The clouds descended slowly over the valley and over the Palace, and wrapped themselves round the Princess who wished to soar above them. The moonlight was blotted out, and before morning the rain was falling with a slow, steady, melancholy patter.

CHAPTER VII. IN LONDON TOWN.

SOME days later the Duke of Greybarrow stood by the window of a house in Eaton Square. The London season had begun, and there was a distant and continuous roar of cabs and carriages. The drawing-room, which the Duke had been pacing for some time previously, looked out upon the trees of the square. They made a brave show of green now, and the flowers boldly defied the smoke and were gaudy and well watered. The room itself was prettily furnished, and showed plain traces of a woman's hand. It belonged to a young widow who had lately lost her husband. She had fled into the country, letting her house to Penzie's uncle at a nominal rent. The Duke had been much favoured by fate, for he had been able to hunt up a few old friends, who almost looked upon him as a returned spirit, so much had his existence been

forgotten. These old friends belonged chiefly to a certain set whose good nature unfortunately exceeded their powers of paying their debts. One of them, a certain Lord Farrant, a jovial, good-natured man, whose youthful follies had been counteracted by his marriage with a lively heiress, was, however, able and willing to forward "Dick Winkell's plans," as he called them. His wife knew a lady who was acquainted with the ways of society, and who was herself well known, but who, having lately lost her money, was now glad to enjoy the pleasures of life for a season at the cost of a stranger.

The Duke had an interview with Mrs. Todd. He found himself confronted with a short and fashionably dressed lady, very voluble and very much at her ease. His courtly manners in no way subdued her. He would have liked to meet with a lady who talked less, but he considered that Penelope was very ignorant of the world, and would need some one who was neither afraid of it, nor its scorn of ignorance.

The Duke was now watching for Penelope's arrival. He looked thoughtful, as if conflicting thoughts were warring against each other. There was a strange new light in his eyes, as if the world had already roused him from the torpor which had enveloped him at Rothery. He might have been a French Marquis living on the edge of the precipice of revolution, insisting on the accustomed etiquette, and smiling at the danger. He even wondered at himself as he looked round the room.

"It is worth venturing," he said aloud. "Penelope must succeed. Her beauty is of no common order, and she has more wits than the ordinary young ladies I have lately met at the Farrants'. If I can hold out for a month or six weeks, the season will be over or nearly so, and then—well, nothing attempted, nothing done." He smiled again at certain remembrances which were hidden too deeply in his mind for even mental words.

So busy was he with these thoughts that he did not see the cab for which he was watching, and out of which Betty stepped to ring the bell. The Duke hurried downstairs just in time to greet Penelope in the hall.

"Come, that's right. Betty will find her own way upstairs. Penzie, let me see you. The roses and the lilies must bloom in this big, black city." He held her a little from him, for he had seen some smart ladies, as he called them, and now he wished to compare Penzie with them.

His smile might have told the Princess that she had stood the test well.

"You are a little pale, but the journey is long. You have not changed your mind?"

Penzie clasped her hands round his arm.

"No, uncle; you see I am here to obey you. I am ready."

"My first command is to think of nothing, my Princess, but how best to enjoy yourself. That will take away the little frown of thought on your brow, which does not befit this gay world. Mrs. Todd comes this evening; till then you and I can enjoy ourselves. When she has arrived I shall go to my club. I have some invitations for you already. All my old friends have not yet forgotten me, you see."

He led her to the chimney-piece, where some invitation cards were displayed, and spread them out before her with child-like pleasure.

"You will soon be at home among the best of them, and Mrs. Todd promises to preside over your wardrobe."

"Oh, uncle, she spoils it all. I must have my own ideas about dress."

"You will be in good hands. Do all that is right; you need not think of expense, Penzie, I have ample—sufficient, that is, for our purpose."

"Are you sure, uncle? I am giving you so much trouble."

He made a deprecating movement with his shapely white hand. These two had entered into a strange contract. The man bent on one object, little understanding a woman's heart; the girl bent on the same object and willing to co-operate in every way, but not yet aware with what dangerous tools she was going to work.

Penelope had stepped, or so it seemed to her, into an altogether different life. She had hardly realised how strange the change would be, how curious to find herself a prisoner between four walls, unable to wander about her glen and her wild hills, or even to go where she liked. Then something of the fascination of the great town struck her mind, as she passed through the crowded streets and beheld the city of which she had heard so much, and of which she had thought at times as of a dark, mysterious place.

"Uncle, how strange it is," she said when she had gone over the house, which was really pretty considering it was in London. "I suppose some persons would hate to live in our Palace, and to face the loneliness of the glen!"

"There is a great fascination in London; I feel it myself. When I was young, Penzie, I was as familiar with London as I am now with Rothery."

"You never speak of that time. What made you come and live at the Palace?"

The Duke sat by the open window and Penelope stood up near the balcony, looking so beautiful in her simple black dress that her uncle's hopes rose higher.

He smiled to himself. His recollections were evidently not very sad, but also not very easily translated.

"It was more prudent to cut oneself off from the fascinations of the world, Penzie. But for you I should not have returned to it."

"Are you sorry?" she said, stooping down and giving one of her rare smiles, which showed of what depth of love she was capable.

"Sorry? I don't know. Some experiences that we have shunned are ever delightful memories even when renounced. But to return to you, child. Mrs. Todd will be coming in a few minutes; after that, remember, you and I will live in public."

"Of course. A stranger can have nothing to do with us—what is really us—but only with the outside life. I can learn soon what is required of me, though you are a little afraid, uncle, that I am only a country maiden."

Penelope laughed a low, musical laugh which it did her uncle's heart good to hear. She was still young at heart, and not incapable of appreciating pleasure. A sudden qualm came over him that he was bringing the girl, unprepared, into a strange world, but he put the thought from him. He had come with a purpose, and with this nothing must interfere.

"The Winkells have always been able to fulfil their self-appointed tasks," he said. "If anything puzzles you, Mrs. Todd will be able to teach you."

"Oh, I shall be silent and learn; I shall not ask her," said Penelope Winkell proudly, with a pride that would have made a woman of the world laugh till she had fathomed its strength.

"You have inherited your great-aunt's pride, Penzie, and added to it some more of your own. Ah! here is the lady. Remember, I had no time to pick and choose, and she is a lady by birth and a woman of the world."

Before Penelope had gathered her ideas together Mrs. Todd was in the room.

good-looking woman of forty, dressed in the height of fashion, and with a smartness of manner and speech which Penelope had never seen before. Nothing but the innate pride which refuses to be surprised or to ask questions prevented her from showing her astonishment, when she was suddenly seized and kissed and when a volley of words was directed at her.

"Miss Winskell, I am so glad to make your acquaintance. How very nice it will be to act chaperon to you! Oh! in five minutes we shall no longer be strangers. Lord Farrant explained everything to me, and we are all going to conspire to make you enjoy yourself immensely. Your first season, too! You are to be presented next week—Lady Farrant undertakes all that. Delightful woman, such spirit! She says I am the only person besides herself who is never tired. Are you really called a Princess in your parts? That is quite romantic. Lord Farrant explained it to me; such a very, very old family yours is, quite decrepit with age, he said. I adore old pedigrees."

"We shall dine at seven to-day, Mrs. Todd," put in the Duke. "Will that suit you?"

"Oh, yes, anything suits me. I suppose you are tired after your journey, but to-morrow we must go to the dressmaker's. I know one who is excellent, and so cheap! I don't tell any one her name, but I shall treat you as a daughter. Your dress is rather countrified, you see. Of course it suits you. I expect everything will suit you. There are some girls who look well in anything, and some who never look well at all. There is a ball at the Farrants' to-morrow. Can we manage to get a dress by then, I wonder? Oh, yes, I think so. I can do wonders. You have a carriage, I trust?"

"A hired brougham," said the Duke.

"That will do. Very soon we shall have heaps of carriages at our disposal. A little management makes everything easy. Now, Miss Winskell, come and show me your wardrobe till dinner is ready. I see you are not the sort of girl who cares for dress, so I shall not bother you more than I can help, and really it is fortunate that you are so good-looking, for it will make my task comparatively easy."

"It is very kind of you to take so much trouble for me," said Penelope, only just able to preserve her self-possession amidst this avalanche of words.

"Oh! not at all. I was born with a

genius for dress. I dressed my dolls fashionably when I was five years old, and I was very miserable if they looked dowdy. That was my gift, just as some people are born artists or musicians. You see, it is quite a delight to me to have some one who will repay my trouble."

They had reached the drawing-room door by this time, and Penelope had made up her mind to be resigned. She even laughed at this new experience because she despised the speaker, though she meant to be an obedient pupil.

"Positively, all your dresses are of the same pattern! How very odd, and yet, perhaps, it is not. Have you never been to London?"

"Never till to-day."

"Good gracious! How charming! But you paid visits in country houses?"

"Never," said Penzie. "I have never left the Palace."

Mrs. Todd could not repress her amusement.

"At the—the Palace you had visitors?"

"Never," said the Princess gravely. "My father dislikes strangers, and we lived quite quietly."

"Quite delightful and romantic! However, that need not be mentioned. I'm sure you'll soon be the fashion because of your beauty; you are not vain, I see."

"I don't know. I believe that beauty is a power, and I want that sort of power."

Mrs. Todd was almost silenced for a moment by the strange answer, and then she too made up her mind not to be surprised.

"Of course beauty is very useful. Chiefly when one wants to be well married."

"That is why we came to London," said Penelope simply, but to Mrs. Todd the answer seemed to go beyond even her own worldliness, which was always veiled in a ladylike manner.

"Ah! Well. Yes. Most mothers go through the season in order to marry their daughters well; only they don't say so. Of course everybody knows it, but perhaps it is as well not to appear to think it."

Penzie took the hint. She saw she had a good many things to learn.

"I shall not say so, but I think it is fair you should know the truth."

"How young and yet how old!" thought the widow; "but how lovely she is!"

Perfect in feature, but she has hardly enough animation about her to compete with the fast girls."

Aloud she added:

"I shall do my best, I can assure you, but I expect you will soon fall in love, with——"

"Oh, no, I am not going to fall in love, Mrs. Todd. I shall marry the richest man who—who is suitable."

The astonished Mrs. Todd was silenced for quite three minutes.

"Oh, well, yes; of course one cannot live without money, and I don't mind owning that I was foolish enough to fall in love with a young officer. We married on nothing a year, and soon repented ever having seen each other, but though I see now that I was foolish, I thought then that I was doing quite the right thing by falling desperately in love."

"Of course you had no higher ideas, but—oh, Mrs. Todd," and Penelope laughed at seeing the look of consternation, "this is my only evening gown, and that was made three years ago to go to a ball."

"A ball! Oh, then, you have been to one?"

Penze laughed again, and Mrs. Todd thought she had never heard such a pretty laugh considering that the girl was so "horribly worldly."

"Yes, our village ball—in the village school-room, lighted with oil lamps, and where the ladies pay threepence; but of course I did not dance. I only went to look on, as the people thought it a great honour for any of us to come to see them dancing."

"Oh, you did not dance?"

"No, but I can dance. Betty was famous for her steps, and she taught me."

"My dear, the whole episode is really very romantic. If you were not so very"—she altered "worldly" to—"wise, I should fancy I was living in romantic times."

"I suppose London has no romance, has it?"

"Romance! I should think not indeed. How about your hat! You must not go in for fashion, but for what suits you. People will forgive you everything."

"Why should they forgive me? I mean to become exactly like a London girl till I marry."

Mrs. Todd again received a mental electric shock.

"Oh, well, yes, it's wiser, of course, but I mean your beauty will make people think that all you do is right. You may lead the

fashion. At least I think so, only fashion is so odd and so fickle. Some seasons the belle is positively ugly! Really I must kiss you again, dear. You are quite delicious and refreshing. A dear, worldly beauty, who has never been to a ball or to a party! Now, let us dress for dinner; this gown will do for just this evening, and tomorrow I shall work hard to make you appear as if you were a leader of fashion."

ABOUT GARDENS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS.

THE history of mankind begins in a garden, and with gardens we associate the charms of romance and the sweet savour of song. They seem to scatter their fragrance and diffuse their bloom over the literature of every nation. Exquisite garden-bits occur in the Sacred Books of the Jews; and no classical scholar can forget the picture in Homer's "Odyssey" of the garden of King Alcinoüs, radiant with eternal spring, or Pliny's fond and elaborate description of his garden at Toscana. Oriental poetry, such as that of Hafiz and Firdusi, teems with imagery borrowed from the garden—that sunny, sumptuous pleasure-ground of the East, in which luxurious Princes toyed away the hours with the beauties of the zenanas. Those Eastern gardens might well delight and inspire the fancy of the bard. How much one might tell, for instance, of the gardens of Solomon, with "the trees of spices" and "reservoirs of water," of which the Targum speaks. Or of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, laid out in gorgeous terraces, each supported by a colonnade of glittering marble. Or of the gardens of Media, which Queen Semiramis constructed at the foot of Mount Baghistan. Or of the Egyptian gardens, severely monumental, with their broad and silent canals adorned by water-lilies, and their avenues shaded by palms and pomegranate-trees. Or of the gardens of Kashmir, which the poet Moore celebrates in his "Light of the Harem"—such as the Floating Gardens of the City of the Sun, which repose on the tranquil bosom of the Dal, or the Nazil Bagh (The Garden of Bliss), first planned by Akbar the Victorious. Or of the gardens of the Mughul Emperor at Delhi, with their alleys of orange-trees and jets of perfumed water. Or of the Daulat Bagd, or Gardens of Splendour, at Ajmir, with its marble pavilions, its bright pools,

its venerable trees. Or of the beautiful Shalimar Gardens at Baghbanpur, laid out for the pleasure of the Emperor, Shah Jahán.

Let us now turn to the West. A joyous little sketch of a Western garden occurs in the animated pages of the "*Roman de la Rose*." Never was any other spot, says the poet, so rich in trees and in singing-birds. So exquisite was the harmony of the feathered minstrels that he who listened straightway forgot his sorrows, and imagined himself in an earthly Paradise. In this fair garden bloomed the violet in all its beauty, and the modest periwinkle; flowers red and white; flowers of every colour, of high price and great value, very fragrant and delectable. Good spicery grew there also: cloves and grains of paradise, aniseed and cinnamon. Tall laurels and lofty pines thrived within its borders; olive-trees and cypresses, branching elms and great forked oaks. Here and there shone crystal fountains, their waters rippling onward with a pleasant sound of melody—just as the poet's verse ripples on, with a music which will be heard for ages.

I love to think of that garden in the "*Decameron*" where Boccaccio assembles the cavaliers and ladies who had fled the plague-swept streets of Florence, to while away the hours with tales of love and passion. It was an extensive pleasure-ground, in the midst of which, and all round about, ran straight broad alleys, covered with embowering vines. Innumerable flowers diffused abroad so strong a perfume that you seemed to walk through the "*Sabaean odours*" of the East. And along the border of each alley white and red roses grew into an impenetrable wall; so that the visitor enjoyed an exquisite combination of shade and perfume. In the centre, belted round with orange and citron-trees, spread a lawn of close-clipped turf, enamelled with flowers of a thousand varieties. Here a fountain of white marble raised aloft a grand luminous column of water, of sufficient volume to have set a mill-wheel in motion. With a delicious murmur the shining pillar fell back into the basin, escaped into subterranean channels, and emerging again into the light of day, formed a network of streams and rivulets, which lighted up the entire garden with their brightness, and charmed its echoes with their music.

It was this fair garden which suggested to Bulwer Lytton that elaborate

scene, in his "*Rienzi*," to which two ladies of Florence, exquisitely dressed, and wearing vizards, introduce the young Adrian di Castillo. Following them across a spacious court, filled on either side with vases of flowers and orange-trees, and then through a wide hall on the further side of the quadrangle, he found himself in the sweetest spot that eye ever saw or poet ever sang. It was a garden-plot of the richest verdure, with clumps of laurel and myrtle opening on either side into "*vistas half-hung with clematis and rose*," the prospect everywhere terminating with statues and gushing fountains. In front, the lawn was bounded by "*rows of vases on marble pedestals filled with flowers*"; while "*broad and gradual flights of steps of the whitest marble led from terrace to terrace, half-way down a high but softly sloping and verdant hill*." One catches an echo, as it were, of this glowing description in the same writer's gloomy novel of "*Lucretia*," where, after sketching the stately mansion of the St. Johns, he speaks of the old-fashioned terrace which skirted it on the garden-side, and led by a double flight of steps to a smooth lawn, intersected by broad gravel walks, shadowed by vast and noble cedars, and gently and gradually mingling with the wilder scenery of the park.

I know of no pleasanter pastime on a day when one cannot get abroad, than wandering among the gardens of the poet and the novelist. For instance, one may betake oneself to the terrace at Belmont, where Lorenzo and Jessica rejoiced in the moonlight and the heavens inlaid with "*golden patines*," while the sounds of sweet music stole through the "*cedarn alleys*." Or to that garden at Verona, in which Juliet and her Romeo tempted Fate and exchanged their passionate vows; or to that at Messina, with the "*pleached hedges*," where Beatrice pierced with the diamond-tipped shafts of her gay wit the fine self-consciousness of Benedick. Or we may turn to Spenser's "*Bower of Bliss*," with its bed of lilies; its pleasant grove full of the stately trees dedicated to "*Olympic Jove*" and to "*his son Alcides*"; and its "*arbour green*," framed of wanton ivy, flowering fair, "*through which the fragrant Eglantine did spread his prickling arms, entailed with roses red*." And then one remembers those old Elizabethan gardens, with their memories of poetry and romance—well-fitted were they to hold the

imagination prisoner! One loves to recall their green banks and blossom-bright terraces; their broad prospects of pasture and cornfield, of hill and vale; their trim arbours garlanded with creeping roses and balmy honeysuckles; their rich masses of the poets' flowers, carnations and gilliflowers, stocks, lupines, and sweet-williams, abounding both in colour and perfume; their long leafy avenues and "wildernesses"; their broad reaches of greensward, soft and smooth as velvet; their dimpling pools and winding rivulets; their tall hedges of holly or hawthorn, and their griffins and peacocks, urns and vases, quaintly moulded in yew and box and laurel. It was in such a garden as this that Sidney meditated his "Arcadia." It was in such a garden as this that Bacon learned to enjoy "the purest of human pleasures"—"the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man, without which buildings and palaces are but gross handy-works"—and to know "what be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air." For example, "roses, damask and red, are fast flowers of their smells"—that is, do not diffuse them abroad—"so that you may walk by a whole row of them and find nothing of their sweetness; yea, though it be in a morning's dew. Bays, likewise," he continues, "yield no smell as they grow, rosemary little, nor sweet marjoram; that which, above all others, yields the sweetest smell in the air, is the violet, especially the white double violet, which comes twice a year, about the middle of April, and about Bartholomew-tide. Next to that is the musk-rose; then the strawberry leaves dying, with a most excellent cordial smell; then the flower of the vines, it is a little dust like the dust of a bent, which grows upon the cluster in the first coming fresh; then sweet-briar, then wall-flowers, which are very delightful to be set under parlour or lower chamber windows; then pinks and gilliflowers, specially the matted pink and clove gilliflower; then the flowers of the lime-tree; then the honeysuckles, so they be somewhat afar off. Of bean-flowers I speak not, because they are field-flowers; but those which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed, are these: that is, burnet, wild thyme, and water-mints; therefore you are to set whole alleys of them, to have the pleasure when you walk or tread."

Bacon's conception of a garden is worthy

of his large and stately intellect; but it was one which only a rich noble could hope to realise. Lord Beaconsfield, in "Vivian Grey," speaks of the pleasure-grounds of Château Désir as carrying out "the romance of the Gardens of Verulam," and it is "a romance" which one naturally associates with such a demesne as Trentham or Chatsworth. An area of thirty acres is to be divided into three parts, a green in the entrance, a heath or desert in the going forth, and a main garden in the midst with alleys on both sides. The central garden is to be square, and encompassed on all sides with a stately arched hedge; "the arches to be upon pillars of carpenter's work of some ten feet high, and six feet broad, and the spaces between of the same dimension with the breadth of the arch." And in the middle is to be a "fair mount," with three ascents and alleys, enough for four to walk abreast, "which," he says, "I would have to be perfect circles, without any bulwarks or embossments; and the whole mount to be thirty feet high, and some fine banquetting house, with some chimneys neatly cast, and without too much glass." There are to be fountains, because they are a great beauty and refreshment; but no pools, because they mar all, and make the garden unwholesome, and full of flies and frogs. The fountains he intends to be of two natures; "the one that sprinkleth or spurteth water; the other a fair receipt of water, of some thirty or forty feet square, but without fish, or slime, or mud." Passing on to the heath or wild garden, we find that it is to be without trees, but to contain "some thickets made only of sweet-briar and honeysuckle, and some wild vine amongst; and the ground set with violets, strawberries, and primroses; for those are sweet, and prosper in the shade; and these to be in the heath here and there, not in any order. I like also," he continues, in his spacious way, "little heaps, in the nature of mole-hills—such as are in wild heath—to be set, some with wild thyme, some with pinks, some with germander, that gives a good flower to the eye; some with periwinkle, some with violets, some with strawberries, some with cowslips, some with daisies, some with red roses, some with liliun convallium (lilies of the valley), some with sweet-williams red, some with bear's foot, and the like low flowers, being withal sweet and sightly, part of which heaps to be with standards of little bushes pricked upon their top

and part without; the standards to be roses, juniper, holly, barberries—but here and there, because of the smell of their blossom—red-currents, gooseberries, rosemary, bays, sweet-briar, and such like; but these standards to be kept with cutting that they grow not out of course.”

Who would not be well pleased to wander in Andrew Marvell's garden, with its vines and melons, its nectarines, and “curious peaches,” and, absorbed in contemplation of all the fair sweet things around, withdraw the mind into its own happiness, “annihilating all that's made to a green thought in a green shade”? Who would not have been content to have enjoyed with Cowley “the blessed shades” he loved so fondly, “the gentle cool retreat from all the immoderate heat in which the frantic world does burn and sweat”?

Then one would like to look in upon Sir William Temple at Moor Park, the gardens of which were originally made by the Countess of Bedford, “with very great care, excellent contrivance, and much art.” Temple, who declared Moor Park to be the sweetest place he had ever seen in his life, at home or abroad, describes them with loving minuteness in his essay, “On the Gardens of Epicurus.” The terraced gravel walk on to which, he says, the best parterre opens, is about three hundred paces long and broad in proportion, the border set with standard laurels, and two summer-houses at the ends. From this walk three descents of stone steps lead into a very great parterre, which is divided by gravel walks and adorned with fountains and statues. At the sides of the parterre are two large cloisters upon arches of stone, and ending with two other summer-houses. Over the cloisters are two terraces covered with lead and fenced with balusters, the entrance to which is from the summer-house. Flights of steps lead from the middle of the parterre into the lower garden, “which is all fruit-trees arranged about the several quarters of a wilderness, the walks all green and leafy, with a grotto” embellished with figures of shell rock-work, fountains and water-works. On the other side of the house spreads a garden of evergreens, “very wild, shady, and adorned with rough rock-work and fountains.”

There is a decided note of artificiality about the Moor Park Gardens, and the reader will perhaps agree with Horace Walpole that any man might design and build as sweet a garden who had been

born in, and never stirred out of, Holborn. But one must regret the disappearance of the walks and parterres among which William the Third discussed matters of high policy with Temple, and taught Temple's secretary to cut asparagus after the Dutch fashion. Moor Park in the middle of the eighteenth century passed into the hands of the great circumnavigator and Admiral Lord Anson, who spent nearly eighty thousand pounds in arranging and embellishing the grounds under the direction of “Capability Brown.” The result was scarcely more satisfactory to Horace Walpole than the original gardens had been. “I was not much struck with it after all the miracles I had heard Brown had performed there. He has undulated the horizon in so many artificial mole-hills, that it is full as unnatural as if it was drawn with a rule and compasses.”

Every lover of gardens hails the poet Pope as a foremost member of the craft. Though his grounds at Twickenham were of small dimensions, he contrived, by the inspiration of his own fine taste, and with the assistance of the two great professional gardeners, Bridgman and Kent, and the advice of that brilliant paladin, Lord Peterborough, to convert them into one of the prettiest gardens in England; and we owe to his example and his teaching the abolition of the prim monotonies of the Dutch style, and the popularity of the picturesque or natural style, generally known as landscape gardening. His practice was not wholly free from defects, it is true, and of his dusky groves, and large lawn, and cypress avenue, he was not half so proud as of the tunnel encrusted with shells and spars and bits of looking-glass, which he called his “Grotto.” But this folly may be forgiven to him in consideration of the good work he accomplished, and the impulse he gave to garden-cultivation. After his death, his house and demesne were purchased by Sir William Stanhope, who enlarged and improved them—though not in Horace Walpole's opinion. “Would you believe it,” he writes to his friend, Sir Horace Mann, “he has cut down the sacred groves themselves! In short, it was a little bit of ground of five acres, enclosed with three lanes, and seeing nothing. Pope had twisted and twirled, and rhymed and harmonised this, till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns opening and opening beyond one another, and the whole surrounded with thick,

impenetrable woods. Sir William has hacked and hewed these groves, wriggled a winding gravel walk through them with an edging of shrubs, in what they call the modern taste, and, in short, has despoiled the three lanes to walk in again—and now is forced to shut them out again by a wall, for there was not a Muse could walk there but she was spied by every country fellow that went by with a pipe in his mouth."

Perhaps poets succeed best in the ideal gardens which they construct in their verse, for there no limitations fetter them; and with a boundless generosity they throw them open to all comers. We may wander with Tennyson's "Maud" in that garden of roses and lilies fair "on a lawn," where she walked in her state, tending on "bed and bower." Or we may muse in that other garden which the poet has depicted with such tenderly minute touches—which was not wholly in the busy world, nor quite beyond it; where the little green wicket in a privet hedge opened into a grassy walk "through crowded lilac ambush trimly pruned"; where in the midst a cedar spread his dark green layers of shade; and the garden-glasses shone in the sunny noon; and every moment "the twinkling laurel scattered silver lights." Or we may enter the garden of "Aurora Leigh," where the ivy climbed headlong up the wall, and the guelder rose, at the lightest beck of the wind, tossed about its "flower-apples," and the verbenas strained the point of passionate fragrance. Or that fanciful garden in Keats's "Endymion," where grew all tendrils green of every bloom and hue, together intertwined and trammelled fresh; the glossy sprouting vine; the ivy with Ethiop berries; the woodbine of our English hedges; the convolvulus; the creeper "mellowing for an autumn blush"; and virgin's bower—that is, the wild clematis, or traveller's joy—"trailing airily." Shelley's garden—in his poem of "The Sensitive Plant"—is too purely imaginative for "human food," and we turn away to Robert Browning's:

Here's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short white siren—
Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box;
And here she paused in her gracious talk,
To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.

A word or two may be said, in conclusion, on the gardens of the novelists, who by the way are too apt, like the poets, to represent them as places of a

miraculous character, where the flowers of all seasons seem to blow simultaneously and spontaneously. By some writers, however, they are treated with great delicacy and with sober truthfulness. Scott's description of the garden at Tully-Weolan is remarkable in this respect. It presented, he says, a pleasant scene. The southern side of the house, clothed with fruit-trees and evergreens, extended along a terrace, which was partly paved, partly gravelled, partly bordered with flowers and choice shrubs. This elevation descended by three flights of steps into what may be called the garden proper, and was fenced along the top by a stone parapet with a heavy balustrade. "The garden, which seemed to be kept with great accuracy, abounded in fruit-trees, and exhibited a profusion of flowers and evergreens, cut into grotesque forms. It was laid out in terraces, which descended rank by rank from the western wall to a large brook, which had a tranquil and smooth appearance where it served as a boundary to the garden; but, near the extremity, leapt in tumult over a strong dam, or weir-head, the cause of its temporary tranquillity, and there forming a cascade, was overlooked by an octangular summer-house, with a gilded bear on the top by way of vane. After this feat, the brook, assuming its natural rapid and fierce character, escaped from the eye down a deep and wooded dell, from the copse of which arose a massive but ruinous tower, the former habitation of the Barons of Bradwardine."

If we had time we might ask the reader to visit Clarissa Harlowe's old-world garden at Harlowe Place; or *De Vais*, as described by Plumer Ward in his admirable though now little read romance. Or we might accompany Lothair to Corisande's garden, where, "in their season, flourished abundantly all those productions of nature which are now banished from our once delighted senses; huge bushes of honey-suckle, and bowers of sweet-pea and sweet-briar, and jessamine clustering over the walls, and gilliflowers scenting with their sweet breath the ancient bricks from which they seemed to spring." Then there is Mr. Rochester's in "Jane Eyre," which was full of all sorts of old-fashioned flowers—stocks, sweet-williams, pansies, mingled with southernwood, sweet-briar, and various fragrant herbs. And, lastly, there is the garden at Chevreul Manor, in "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story," with its great pond,

where a pair of swans swam lazily with one leg tucked under a wing, and the open water-lilies lay, accepting the kisses of the fluttering sparkles of light; with its smooth emerald-green lawn, sloping down to the rougher and browner herbage of the park; and with its parterres glowing in their various splendours, while verbenas and heliotropes gave up their finest incense to the airs of heaven.

The subject is a wide one, and I have touched only the borders of it; but what I have said may suffice to indicate to the reader its "potentiality" of interest, if he cares to pursue it further.

NO MORE.

Oh, the soft wind over the sea,
Oh, the soft wind over the dunes,
And the music that sighs to the midnight skies,
In the light that is all the moon's!
The moon's, aye, and ours, who watch by the sea,
And dream of the days that will never be.

For the soft wind over the sea,
And the soft wind over the dunes,
Do but whisper a lie to my sweetheart and I,
In the light that is all the moon's.
For fate is too mighty for him and for me,
Though we dream of the days that will never be.

The winds will laugh over the sea,
The winds will play over the dunes,
And others will dream in the mystical gleam
Of the light that is all the moon's.
But we shall be parted, we two, though we
Still may hope of the days that will never be.

Oh, the soft wind over the sea,
Oh, the soft wind over the dunes,
The low sweet laughter, the quick tears after,
In the light that is all the moon's!
We shall not forget the sweet watch by the sea,
Or the days that we dreamt of, that never shall be.

THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL.

IN THREE PARTS. PART I.

ON the eve of the opening of this Canal—which is likely to do more for Midland England than Midland England imagines—I found myself in a Manchester hotel, set to dine face to face with a gentleman from Liverpool. Our conversation soon, and inevitably, drifted upon the one great topic. It was December the thirty-first, 1893. This "one great topic" was not the ending of one year and the beginning of another, with all its unknown vicissitudes. Oh dear, no! The Ship Canal is reckoned in Lancashire as something of more importance than the thoughts that may be supposed to be generated by retrospect and anticipation. The one is a practical matter; the other is commonly held to be an affair of sentiment solely. And

the typical Lancashire man is nothing if he is not practical, and pre-eminently practical.

"An amazing work, to be sure!" I murmured, in echo of the tone of the Manchester papers these years past.

"Amazing—not at all!" was the prompt reply. "These fellows here are rare hands at blowing their own trumpet, but after the Suez Canal the Manchester Ship Canal is just child's play. The amazing part of it is—if there is anything at all amazing in it, that is—that forty or fifty thousand deluded individuals should hope to get dividends out of it. Their grandsons may, or may not. For my part, I live for myself, not for my grandchildren."

In objection, I mentioned the opinion of experts at the outset of the undertaking. These gentlemen said that the difficulties connected with the Canal were not financial but merely engineering, and such as hinged on the vested interests which would necessarily be disturbed by it.

"My dear sir," retorted my vis-à-vis, laying down his knife and fork—we were at the fish course—"people will say anything. That was to gull the public. The public isn't satisfied to have its few hundreds or thousands as bank deposits. It lives in terror of banks breaking. Besides, it wants more interest than banks pay for deposits. And so it goes in for the Ship Canal, gold mines in the Goodwin Sands—or anything else that can be fixed up in a prospectus."

We argued the matter until the sweets—or rather he did. Then we paused, each much where he was at the beginning.

I might as reasonably expect to hear an account of the good qualities of a man from the girl with whom the man has recently played fast and loose, as have looked for an unprejudiced estimate of the chances of the Manchester Ship Canal from a Liverpool man of this prejudiced stamp.

There was a considerable amount of noise and conviviality that night, both inside the hotel and outside it. Probably never in one spell was more whisky drunk in this famous city—and the Canal was toasted and cheered quite as much as were individuals.

The New Year opened the next morning with a promise that made one fancy dear old Father Time is not averse to libations of spirituous liquors. The normal state of the weather in Manchester in winter is dismal. But "on this aus-

picious occasion"—as was said more than once at civic banquets in connection with the Canal—there was a suggestion of honest sunshine, if only mortals would possess their souls in patience. Nowhere, perhaps, has the sun more effort to make to pierce the terrestrial veil of fog and common smoke. It was clear, however, that on this first of January, 1894, the sun meant to do its best to smile on the Ship Canal, its forty thousand assembled shareholders, its proud directors and contrivers, the ships and sheds themselves with their motley bunting, the hundreds of thousands of holiday-makers on both sides of the Canal's five-and-thirty miles of banks, and even on the brown waters of the Canal, which make not the least claim to pellucidity—even at this early stage in their institution for the service of commerce.

Before I ask my readers to come with me to Liverpool, and thence to make the inaugural voyage to Manchester in the "Fairy Queen," I must really do my best to show that the Liverpool gentleman mentioned above had not a clear case against the Canal, either as a speculation or as an achievement.

He thrust the Suez Canal upon me as an argument. This argument may be straightway turned against him.

Granted that the eternally shifting sand of the Suez Canal is a more serious opponent for engineers than the sandstone and embankments of the Ship Canal, so much the more creditable is it that the Suez Canal should yet prove so sound a financial undertaking. Three rows of figures will here be necessary :

SUEZ CANAL TRAFFIC.

| Year. | Ships. | Tons. | Receipts in France. |
|-------|--------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1870 | 486 | 435,911 | 5,159,327 |
| 1875 | 1,494 | 2,940,708 | 28,886,302 |
| 1881 | 2,727 | 5,794,401 | 51,274,352 |

This, for a ten years' growth, is remarkable, and was expected by few people, if any.

The Manchester Ship Canal is destined to serve the many large towns—each populous enough to be a Continental capital—which cluster so thickly in East Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, as well as Manchester herself. Some seven or eight millions of people will be immediately affected by it—even at present.

How? you ask.

Well, chiefly in the reduction of the cost of manufacturing the cotton and

woollen goods which are the staple product of this important district. The raw cotton will be brought by the Canal into Manchester for seven shillings a ton, whereas the cost of its delivery through Liverpool and the railway was, in December, 1893, thirteen shillings and eightpence a ton. The difference in wool is even greater: viz., seven shillings and ninepence to sixteen shillings and fivepence.

This lessening of the cost of producing piece goods must stimulate the demand for Manchester manufactures. Shirtings "made in Austria" have from their superior cheapness—not superior quality—competed only too successfully with the Manchester merchants in foreign markets. The Canal will give the latter immediate hope.

We may assume, then, that the mills will receive more orders than before. More mills will almost necessarily be built and more employment given. Wages, however, are not likely to be lowered in consequence.

But how, you ask, will the Canal directly profit the millions of operatives in the district? It may be supposed likely to enrich the capitalists, but the toiling mill hand—what about them?

The Canal will do for the commonest articles of food and drink what it does for cotton and wool. Bacon and hams, for example, will be delivered in Manchester now for six shillings and sevenpence a ton instead of fifteen shillings; tinned meats for eight shillings instead of seventeen shillings and fivepence; tea for eight shillings and sevenpence against eighteen shillings and twopence; wheat in sacks for four shillings and tenpence against nine shillings and elevenpence; lump sugar for six shillings and eightpence against seventeen shillings and elevenpence; oranges for five shillings instead of fourteen shillings and ninepence. Petroleum also must be noticed. By canal it will be delivered in Manchester for five shillings and elevenpence a ton against fourteen shillings and fivepence through Liverpool as hitherto.

But, quite apart from any hopes they may have in the Canal, the working classes have already drawn millions from it. My Liverpool friend would of course say sardonically that it was the same with the Panama Canal. The labourers on that deadly iathmus who survived the climate no doubt earned good money. But it was the "good money" of the "bourgeoisie"

and others. So, my Liverpool friend might protest, with the Ship Canal money. The eight million pounds of ordinary and preference shares represent the sacrifice of the middle and moneyed classes for the working class pure and simple.

The first sod of the Canal was cut by Lord Egerton of Tatton, the chairman of the Company, on November the eleventh, 1887. Since then navvies by the thousand have worked here without interruption. At one time sixteen thousand three hundred and sixty-one men and boys were employed. Much still remains to be done. The docks at Warrington have to be formed, the embankment at Runcorn completed, and a finish put to the sides of the cutting in a hundred places. For a couple of years more, perhaps, men will be at work here by the thousand, and when the Canal is perfected, there will remain the army of permanent servants of the Company—bridge-tenders, dock employes, and all the hundreds of others who are an inevitable part and parcel of a going concern.

Up to the end of June, 1893, no less than eight million eight hundred and sixty-one thousand seven hundred and sixty pounds had been expended in wages and the necessary materials for the Canal. The whole sum absorbed by them was thirteen million four hundred and seventy thousand two hundred and twenty-one pounds, which includes the purchase of the Bridgewater Canal for one million seven hundred and eighty-two thousand one hundred and seventy-two pounds, and land and compensation—especially to railway companies—one million one hundred and sixty-one thousand three hundred and forty-seven pounds. The railway companies have of course harassed the Canal directors very greatly. They were not likely to see their pleasant monopoly taken from them without a protest. But Acts of Parliament have been more potent than railway boards. The nation has empowered the Canal Company to compel the railway companies to build bridges and submit to the intrusion of the waterway; though, of course, the Canal Company has had to pay the piper—extravagantly indeed, most disinterested persons think.

To meet this huge expenditure, of course the original eight million pounds was inadequate. A first mortgage of one million eight hundred and twelve thousand pounds supplemented it, and later a second mortgage of six hundred thousand

pounds. Nor was this all. Things looked black with the Canal when all this money was spent, and more was wanted. It seemed impossible to continue mortgaging the work, and yet hope that such sums as could be raised would suffice. To put an end to this peddling procedure, the Manchester Corporation at length came nobly to the rescue. "You want more money," these great-hearted and large-purposed gentlemen observed. "Very well. The Canal must not become bankrupt and purposeless. What do you say to five millions? Will that see you through?"

In effect, Manchester lent five million pounds to the Company, and saved the Canal that is to bring her such a rich argosy in return.

Of the total capital of fifteen million four hundred and twelve thousand pounds thus at disposal, at the end of June, 1893, nearly two million pounds remained in the exchequer. No farther demands, or rather appeals, are likely to be made to the public on the Canal's behalf. It is already an established fact, with ships steaming to and fro on it, and dock labourers are doing on the Manchester wharves the same kind of work with which Londoners are familiar Thames way, east of London Bridge. A revenue has begun. It remains to be seen if the growth of that revenue is to put the growth of the earnings of even the Suez Canal to the blush.

By the way, it is notorious that our British water canals are most profitable institutions. The Bridgewater Canal—which has been bought by the Ship Canal Company—at the time of its transfer had doubled the value of its shares. The Birmingham Canal shares had, in 1883, increased in worth from one hundred pounds each to about three thousand two hundred pounds. The Leeds and Liverpool Canal, in 1842, paid thirty-four per cent. in dividends, and in the last twenty years have paid twenty-two per cent., notwithstanding the great competition they have had to fight against.

Other instances might be given. But the above may suffice. Surely, the promoters of the Ship Canal exclaim, if these comparatively trivial undertakings succeed so admirably, our famous work may hope for the best, in spite of our enormous liabilities.

But, it may be demurred, will not the railway companies affected by this formidable rival lower their rates so as to cut its throat?

They would, it may be guessed, be only

too quick to do this if they could, for there is no mercy shown in commercial life. But they cannot do it. If they were to carry cotton and wool for nothing from Liverpool to the mill towns, there would still be the Liverpool charges of portage to the bad against them. They would, in fact, have to consent to be two or three shillings per ton out of pocket on all this kind of business. Railway directors there may be—though it is doubtful—whose lust for revenge would urge them to deal this blow to the Canal they hate. But there are shareholders to be reckoned with, as well as their own colleagues. These would soon put a stop to such expensive fanaticism.

And now let us glance briefly at some figures which may help to make the Canal comprehensible. Figures are not attractive to all people. I, for my own part, feel uneasy in their presence. But in certain relations they are not to be dispensed with, and an account—however slight—of the Manchester Ship Canal would be impossible without them.

Between the Mersey at Liverpool and the Manchester docks, there is a rise in level of sixty feet six inches. The Canal begins at Eastham, on the Cheshire side of the Mersey, a few miles below Birkenhead, and is thirty-five and a half miles long. For the rise in level of course locks are necessary. Of these there are five: Eastham, Latchford, Irlam, Barton, and Mode Wheel.

The Manchester Ship Canal locks are the most picturesque points in the course. We are all used to the congregation of common canal boats at the locks on simple inland canals; and some of us know the charms of the locks on the Thames. But the colour and animation likely to characterise these Ship Canal locks will be something new in English experience. It is one thing for hard-lunged and rather coarse-speeched boatmen to assemble impatiently at an ordinary canal lock, waiting their turn for a rise—or fall. It will be quite another to see a procession of laden steamers or barques preceded by tugs, each with its various style of cargo, its various aspect, destination, and even crew—all tarrying for the lock-master's good offices. On the first of January a few thousand cameras were used against the decorated shipping in the Canal—and nowhere were these amateur photographers more urgent than at the locks of Latchford and Irlam.

They are enormous contrivances, these locks; all save that of Eastham consisting

of two chambers, the larger six hundred feet by sixty-five, and the smaller three hundred and fifty feet by forty-five. At Eastham, the most important point, as being where ships enter and leave the Mersey proper, the lock measurements are six hundred feet by eighty, and three hundred and fifty feet by fifty. There is here yet a third lock, one hundred and fifty feet by thirty.

Half-a-dozen vessels of moderate size may thus be lifted or lowered in the locks simultaneously. On the first of January we were one of a company of six, with a Norwegian timber ship abreast of us, so that we could shake hands with the crew; a Newcastle vessel before us; and another Liverpool tripper, packed with singing and shouting excursionists, aft of us. It was a novel experience, and a proof that there are hardly limits to the performing powers of water and skilful engineers in conjunction.

The average width of the Canal at water level is one hundred and seventy-two feet; its minimum width at the bottom is one hundred and twenty feet. Its least depth is twenty-six feet. With fair helm work there will be no difficulty about one large steamer passing another anywhere in the Canal.

At present the Canal is not electrically lighted like that of Suez. Ships anxious to make their way up to Manchester or from it in the night must carry their own electric batteries. We may surely, however, anticipate the time when this great cutting will have the Company's lamps all up its course. There are already signs of two or three young towns on its banks. These baby municipalities will profit by this almost assured illumination. But they must take heed of the children of their citizens. The vertical red banks of the Canal are a most mortal peril to youngsters and adults alike.

Sandstone, red and yellow, marl, clay, gravel, sand, and loam over sandstone—such are the substances the navvies, both human and mechanical, have had to tackle in constructing the Canal. It has been sheer excavation. For this purpose, at one time, the following effective appliances were in use: one hundred steam excavators, including floating dredgers, steam navvies, and Ruston and Proctor's contrivances; one hundred and seventy-three locomotives, six thousand three hundred waggons, and two hundred and twenty-three miles of temporary railway; one hundred and ninety-four steam and other cranes; two hundred

and nine steam pumps; and fifty-nine pile engines. Add the sixteen thousand three hundred and sixty-one men and boys, and the busy scene may be imagined.

The locomotives are still to be seen speeding up and down the somewhat loosely fastened rails, and waggons and men are still thick on the banks here and there. But anon they will disappear. For years, however, the remains of their litter will defy rain and wind.

Horses have been used but sparsely, less than two hundred at any time. One may be glad of this, for the heavy labour would have told badly upon them. It is a work more fit for horse power in the form of steam than for the quadruped integers. How many horses, for example, would have been required to tackle the removal of the seventy-six million tons of material taken from the Canal bed; and how many decades would they have wanted for the work steam has accomplished in six years?

A single English steam excavator at its best can shift two thousand cubic yards—each weighing one and a half tons—of soil in a day. Such a record speaks for itself.

Nothing so much as the bridges over the Canal impresses a simple observer with respect for the energy and capital and ability spent in the work. Some of the deviation bridges—works forced upon the railway companies by Acts of Parliament—are colossal fabric, notably that at Latchford, which weighs one thousand two hundred and twenty tons.

The swing-bridges, of which there are seven—and more seem necessary, or else the establishment of ferries here and there—are also delightful aids to human self-esteem. It is distinctly exhilarating to see a mass of iron weighing anything from five hundred tons to one thousand eight hundred, revolving in response to the peremptory whistling of a steamer as readily as one's own library chair. That of the Trafford Road, near Manchester, is the largest—weighing one thousand eight hundred tons, and with a forty-eight feet roadway.

One is a little curious about the future of these swing-bridges. It is all very well just now when the passage of boats is intermittent. But by-and-by we may expect a continuous "queue" of steamers between Runcorn and Barton. Who will then have to go to the wall: the pedestrian and vehicular public who seek to cross the Canal—by these bridges—or the ships'

owners? I dare say my alarm will seem an exaggeration; but time will show.

In concluding this paper, mention must be made of the imposing terminus of the Canal in Manchester. To the stranger the sight is a revelation. Small marvel that the people of Manchester exult with pride in the result.

Here in the heart of Lancashire—almost indeed of England—are two hundred and fifty-six acres of water space for ships, with quays more than five miles long. The horizon on all sides is that of a toil-driven manufacturing town. Of the existence of the sea there is no suggestion save in this park of water, with its scores—soon to become hundreds—of steamers lying comfortably in port.

The spectacle provokes enthusiasm, and Mr. Rawnsley's sonnet in commemoration of this New Year's Day does not seem too exuberant in the presence of these docks:

Now let the ocean wanderers, going free,
Pass in upon the many-gated tide;
By tranquil mead and quiet woodland glide
To that loud harbour where their hearts would be.
To-day "Mancunium" would espouse the sea;
By skill invincible and courage tried,
She shares with Mersey's queen her queenly pride,
And claims from far-off lands the shipman's fee.
Irwell is glad in all her inland rills,
Albeit she coil no more in careless play;
The sounding city where her crossways roar
Hears the great thunder of our island shore.
And, mixed with breath from her ten thousand
mills,
She feels sea-breezes on her brow to-day.

A SOMBRE WOOING.

A COMPLETE STORY.

WHEN I fell out of work in the autumn of 1892, I had so little notion I'd be likely to stay out any length of time that I didn't even trouble to look for a job during the first fortnight.

"Ben, my boy," says I to myself, "you shall have a real holiday the same as a clerk."

For a week or so I was as happy as I'd expected to be, which is saying a good deal. It was the time of year when every working man, no matter how little of a grumbler he may be as a general rule, has a grievance against the sun for going on short time, and it was just nuts to me to wake up in the dark, especially on a wet morning, and lie listening to the footsteps pattering past till I dropped off to sleep again. After my breakfast, which I took at a coffee-shop late enough to get a whole morning paper to myself, I'd walk down to the Free Library in Kennington Lane for a good read at the weeklies and

magazines. In the afternoons I went about London, learning it I might almost say, for though I'd lived in Lambeth nearly ten years, I knew but little of the Middlesex side the river.

Twice that first week I went to a theatre and three times to a music-hall, but afterwards I mostly stuck to the library, evenings as well as mornings, partly because when I came to reckon up on the Saturday night, I found my money had melted at a most surprising rate, and partly because I'm really fonder of reading than of anything else in the way of amusement.

By the end of the second week I began to get down-hearted. It wasn't empty pockets—I had enough put by to see me through the winter if I was careful—or fear of not finding a job after my bit of a spree was over that set me wondering why the world was ever made, or such as me sent into it, but what, for want of a better word, I must call mental indigestion. Just as a man's stomach gets upset if he takes too much beer—or too much beef either, for that matter—my mind broke down because I overloaded it with print.

I read anything and everything I found on the tables in the reading-rooms, not to mention books out of the lending library I took home with me—if you can call a room with a bed and a chair and a bit of a rickety table in it at the top of a house full of lodgers, a home—and, being but an ignorant chap, it was too much for me. As long as I stuck to the stories it wasn't so bad. It was the histories and philosophies which bothered me.

They made me feel I was a sort of ant, living for just a little while in a hill which wouldn't last very long itself. Thousands of ant-hills there'd been, it seemed, since the beginning of things, and some were trampled flat, like Babylon and places in Egypt with names I can't spell. Others, like Rome, weren't what they'd once been, and some, like London, were still growing, only, perhaps, to be kicked into dust in their turn. What it all meant I wondered then as I wonder now, only now I've other things to think about, which keep me from dwelling till I'm crazed on the riddle no man, according to the most up-to-date of the philosophies, can find an answer to.

That I should have lost my wits I verily believe, if it hadn't been for a young woman. By the end of that second week I knew all the regular frequenters of the

rooms by sight, and could pretty well tell what time it was by the exits and the entrances of those who weren't just loafers like myself. This girl, though, was a loafer; that is, I mean she was there at all hours. She looked like a work-girl, too—unless it's my fancy that girls who go out to earn a living, or part of one, look different to those who stay at home and help their mothers—so I concluded that, like me, she was for the time being out of collar.

At the Kennington library they keep the magazines and many of the weeklies in an inner room, and in that inner room we mostly used to sit—she at the table set apart for ladies with her face to the light, and me a little higher up the room with my back to it. Consequently, if I tilted my chair back against the wall and went in for a bit of a think, I'd often stare straight at her, sometimes without knowing it, and sometimes wondering who she was and what she did. Once she looked up from her book and caught me, and, though she looked down again instantly, our eyes had met. There must, I suppose, have been some sort of sympathy in the glance they exchanged, for after that I began to think I'd like to know her.

She was a nice-looking girl in all senses of the word—though, perhaps, I need hardly say that—but as modest-behaved as she was pretty, so it was a month or more before I got a chance to improve what I felt was already almost my acquaintance with her.

One night early in November I left the reading-room about five minutes after she did, and, as my head was a bit heavy, I didn't make straight for my lodgings near Spurgeon's Tabernacle, but turned down a side street, meaning to work across to the Walworth Road, walk up to the Elephant and so home. I had crossed the Kennington Park Road, and was going down New Street—the Electric Railway station's at the corner of it, if you know that part of London—when I caught sight of that young woman in front of me. I was just going to turn round and go back for fear she'd think I'd been following her, when a chap coming up the street stopped and spoke to her.

"Ullo! my dear," he sings out pretty loud. "This ain't a time of night for you to be out all by your pretty self. Better lem'me see you home."

Half drunk or more I knew he was the moment I heard his voice, but he might have been a friend of hers or even her

sweetheart, so I stepped aside into a doorway and waited.

"But it is my business," he went on, whereby I guessed she'd told him to mind his own. "It's everybody's business, is beauty unprotected. I'll see you as safe as houses, and I assure you there's been an earthquake or something a little lower down the road which makes it——"

"Let me pass, please," she interrupted, speaking up as if anxious to be overheard, "or I'll call for help."

"Help!" says he. "Help! What the deuce is the girl talking about, when the best help in all London's at her service? I do believe you've been drinking, miss. At your time of life you ought to be ashamed of yourself. What do you think, mister?"

"Why, that you'd best clear off and go home before another earthquake comes along," said I, for seeing how things were I'd come forward. "This young lady's under my care, thank you."

"Oh! Is she?" says he. "Then you should look after her better. In my time we walked alongside our young women, not a hundred yards behind 'em. Good-night."

"Good-night, governor," said I, not sorry to see him stagger off without making a fuss, for he was an oldish chap, and weakly looking, so I didn't want to knock him down.

That was how I came to know Lizzie Wintle. She lived alone in a street off the Walworth Road, and was, as I thought, a work-girl—a tailoress—out of work. Once the ice was broken we soon got very friendly, as we might well have done even if we hadn't taken to each other as kindly as we did, for we were both feeling about as lonely as a policeman on night duty in a quiet suburb, and when you're feeling lonely almost any company is better than none.

It wasn't long, either, before I began to feel that Lizzie's company was better than any I'd ever kept. Though I was nearly six-and-twenty, I'd never what you might call walked out with a young woman before—not regularly, nor with any idea of sweethearting, and, indeed, I'd no idea of sweethearting Lizzie, not at first.

I was still out of work, for though I'd started to look for it after my fortnight was up, I couldn't find it; and when a man's out of work, he don't think straight off about getting married, unless he happens to be a real warranted A 1 kind of a fool. No. It was partly in the hope I might

cheer her up a bit—any one could see she was getting more and more low-spirited as the weeks went by—and partly out of pure selfishness and for the sake of having somebody to talk to that I took to squiring her about.

We did go about, too, when we got friendly. There's not a free show in London we did not visit that winter, and to those that lay fairly handy, such as the British Museum, the National Gallery, and the Geological Museum in Jermyn Street—we liked that Geological Museum. Nobody hardly seemed to go there, and we could sit and enjoy a quiet talk—we went over and over again.

We were able to have these little outings and still keep an eye on the chance of a job. In my line—the joinery trade—if you don't find what you want first thing in the morning, it's not much use looking for it afterwards, and Lizzie said it was the same in her business. So, after going the round of the shops before breakfast, we'd meet at the Free Library, and spend the rest of the day together.

About Christmas, though, our outings began to get few and far between. Lizzie would say thank you, but she didn't care about going to-day, and I'd either go off in a huff by myself, or sit reading whatever I chanced to pick up without knowing or caring what it was about.

What made me huffy was this. Wherever we went Lizzie had always insisted on paying her share of the expenses, if there happened to be any, such as a bus or a tram fare, or perhaps a cup of tea and a slice of bread-and-butter during the afternoon. When she began to refuse to come I guessed it was because her money was running short, and I was vexed that she'd deny me the pleasure of her company through pride about a few coppers.

One night early in the New Year, when I was seeing her home from the library, I hinted at what I felt about it, and did it so clumsily that I hurt her feelings. Consequently there was a sort of coolness between us for a bit. I let my temper get so badly the better of me that I stayed away from the library for three days, and when I went back she pretended not to see me. About half-past twelve she went out to get, as I supposed, her bit of dinner at a coffee-shop near, where we'd often been together. Ten minutes later I followed, meaning to ask her to make it up, but she wasn't there. I ordered a small mutton and potatoes, and, as it happened,

the landlord, who knew us both as regular customers, served me.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" says he. "You're quite a stranger. We thought you'd left this part, or that you and the young woman had made a match of it and gone off on your honeymoon."

"No chance of that," says I. "We're both out of collar. But ain't she been in to-day?"

"No," says he. "We ain't had the pleasure of her custom since you was last here together on—let me see—Monday, wasn't it?"

This set me on the notion she might be trying to make her money last longer by going without her dinner. I bolted my mutton, hurried out and had a look into every coffee-shop round about in the hope of finding her, but I didn't, nor did she come back to the reading-room any more that day, which was Friday.

I was in a fine stew that night. She'd had a watch when I first knew her, but I'd not noticed her wearing it since Christmas, and it was only a little silver Geneva, she'd not be able to get more than ten or fifteen shillings on, so it was likely enough she was in very low water indeed. I felt I'd been a brute to talk as lightly as I had about what was a penny between friends, when it was possible she hadn't one in the world. In London, too, if you lose sight of any one—especially any one who's under the weather—for a couple of days, you may never clap eyes on them again, so at last I made bold to go round to her lodgings and ask if she was still there.

"Yes," said the landlady. "But she's leaving to-morrow."

"Do you know where she's going?" I asked.

"No," says she. "But I hope it's to friends. She's been out of work a long time, and, though she's paid up honourable all that's due, she's no money left I'm certain, and that's bad, especially for a girl. You'll excuse me asking, but are you keeping company with her, young man?"

She seemed a decent sort of body, so I told her exactly how Lizzie and I stood. When I'd done she asked me in.

"We can talk better in my parlour than at the door," says she.

She hadn't given Lizzie notice it seemed, but I suppose the girl's pride was that high it wouldn't let her stay on when she couldn't pay her way.

"I'd never have thought of turning her out," concludes the landlady—Mrs. Parsons,

her name was. "But as she said she was going, it wasn't my business to say don't, was it?"

"No," said I. "I can't say it was. I'm almost sure she has nowhere to go, though. If I was to pay you her rent for next week, would you keep her here?"

"I would if I could," said Mrs. Parsons. "And that whether the rent was paid or not, but I can't keep her against her will, and she's always kept herself to herself, that exclusive, I really don't know whether she'd thank me for interfering in her affairs."

It was likely enough she wouldn't, so having persuaded the old woman not to let the room until she heard from me, I said I'd try to see Lizzie myself in the morning and find out what she thought of doing. She didn't come out in the morning though, nor yet in the afternoon. I loafed about in sight of the door till I was afraid I'd be run in as a suspicious character, as perhaps I should have been, only when I saw the policeman on the beat had his eye on me, I told him I was waiting for my young woman.

I didn't like to call and ask for her, because she might have refused to see me, and besides, even if she had seen me, what could I have said? It was one thing to meet her, as she'd think, by chance and try to find out what her plans were, and quite another to ask her plump and plain what she meant doing.

When she did come out it was after ten. She hadn't a box or even a bag with her, so it didn't look as if she was going to fresh lodgings.

"Perhaps," said I to myself, "she's arranged with the old woman about staying on, and is just going to do a bit of shopping. I won't speak now but follow her."

I thought it would look more natural and accidental like if I came up and said, "Good evening, Miss Wintle. This is an unexpected pleasure," or something of that sort, when she was picking out her bit of meat, or whatever it might be she fancied for Sunday.

But instead of making for the Walworth Road, her handiest market, she went off up New Street, and when she came to the Kennington Park Road she didn't turn to the right where the shops are, but crossed it. I thought she might be going to Lambeth Walk, where things are wonderfully cheap, and not nearly so nasty as some folks think; but near Lambeth Workhouse I lost her, and hurried on,

hoping rather than expecting, I might find her again in the Walk.

I worked it steadily from end to end and back, running my eye over all the crowds in front of the butchers' shops—though for that matter, it's all crowd there on a Saturday night, only the folks jam together a bit closer where they hear the "Buy! buy! buy!"—but I could see nothing of her. What to do I didn't know, so I turned down a quiet street leading to the Albert Embankment to think, and presently I wandered on to the Embankment itself. It was a bitter cold night and rather foggy. The trams were running, of course, but there were very few foot-people about, especially on the river side of the way.

The river itself was full of lumps of ice and heaps of frozen snow floating down with the tide, which was about half ebb, and the scene altogether was about as well calculated to depress a man, who didn't feel over bright to begin with, as it could be. As I stood looking out over the water, and thinking I'd never heard a more melancholy sound than the grinding of the ice-blocks one against another, Big Ben struck eleven. The boom of the bell roused me. I'd been leaning over the parapet about half-way between Lambeth and Vauxhall Bridges, and, as the clock finished striking, I started to walk along towards Vauxhall, meaning to get back to Lizzie's lodgings as quickly as I could and ask whether she'd come in.

I hadn't gone thirty yards before I found her. She was leaning over the parapet, staring at the river that hard, she never noticed me till I put my hand on her shoulder.

"Why, Miss Wintle," says I, "this is an unexpected pleasure."

It sounded even sillier than it looks on paper, but the words being in my mind, slipped out before I could think of anything more suitable for the occasion.

She gave a wild, hysterical sort of laugh, and then burst out crying. I put my arm round her, and she had her cry out with her head on my shoulder.

"Oh, Ben!" she whispered when she'd finished. "Let me go. If you knew what I was thinking of doing just now you wouldn't touch me."

It wasn't hard to guess she meant the river, so I just held her a bit tighter and says:

"Don't talk about such things, deary. Besides, you're all right now, aren't you?"

"Yes," says she, nestling a bit closer.

"But—but I believe I should have done it if the tide had been right up."

"No, you wouldn't," says I, though inwardly I thanked Heaven for the yard or two of shingle which lay between the foot of the Embankment and the edge of the water. "Don't you begin to fancy you ever meant such a thing, my dear, but come and have a bit of supper along with me, and then I'll see you home."

"But, Ben," says she, "I have no home. I've left Mrs. Parson's."

I broke it to her gently for fear her pride might take offence at what I'd done, but it seemed to have all gone out of her, and she thanked me so humbly that I felt ashamed of having made her even that little beholden to me.

"No, no," says I. "It's me that has to thank you, Lizzie. But come. You'll catch your death of cold if we stand here any longer. Let's walk on, and I'll tell you as we go."

I found it hard to make her believe what a bad way I'd been in when I first got to know her; not because she didn't catch my meaning—she'd been knocked over pretty much in the same way herself when she first found out what a lot more than she could understand there is in books—but because she would have it I was exaggerating for the sake of making out all the gratitude was owed on my side.

However, we were too happy to argue long, much less fall out. What a curious thing love is! I hadn't much more than ten pounds in the world, and poor Lizzie hadn't a penny piece, yet we were as happy as—well, as the night was cold. We reckoned we'd loved each other about a month without knowing it, and we agreed to consider that month as time lost—that was after we'd had our supper, and were making our way to Lizzie's lodgings through the quietest streets we could find.

"And seeing we've lost that time," says I, "don't you think I'd better give notice for the banns on Monday?"

"But, Ben," says she, "remember we're both out of work. How are we to live?"

"To tell the truth, my dear," I replied, "that's just what's puzzling me; but as we've made such a terrible bad job of living apart, we can't well do worse if we try it together."

She had to admit the truth of that, and, under the circumstances, I think you'll agree that an "improvident marriage," as they call it, was the only course open to

us. In about three weeks' time we took that course, and, Mrs. Parsons being agreeable, set up housekeeping in Lizzie's room, which was larger and in many ways more convenient than mine.

We were down almost to our last shilling before I found work, but I did find good work just in time, and, thank Heaven! I've kept it ever since. We've got two rooms now and our own furniture—in the same house, though. We shan't leave Mrs. Parsons in a hurry, and we're beginning to put by a bit against the next rainy day.

We still read a good deal, though mostly novels and at home, and we're so happy that I tell Liz we're out of the fashion—as nowadays, according to the books, folks' troubles seem to begin instead of end with the wedding. She says if that's the case she doesn't care how long we keep out. Between you and me, and the baby, no more do I.

MISS GARTH.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

THE next day, when Lady Carstairs sailed into the great hall where afternoon tea was generally held, she beheld a stranger there, talking earnestly to Jocelyn Garth.

It was not quite four o'clock, and the match footmen had not yet disturbed the shadowy serenity of the fire-lit hall. Two or three men were lounging about and talking to each other, but the ladies, with their flowing tea-gowns, and dimpled smiles and soft voices, had not yet made their appearance.

Lady Carstairs wondered curiously who the man could be. She knew most of Jocelyn's friends of old. Perhaps it was some chance acquaintance come to call; perhaps—at that moment Jocelyn turned round and saw her.

She had been standing with one hand resting on the high oak mantel-shelf, carved by master fingers that had long since crumbled away to dust. Now her arm dropped to her side and she stood away from it.

"Mr. Dalgarno," she said to the new guest, "allow me to present you to my aunt, Lady Carstairs."

Lady Carstairs gave a languid bow, and sank into a great softly-cushioned chair by the fire. The new-comer aroused no in-

terest in her now she had seen him close. Rather a handsome, foreign-looking man, but dressed in the worst taste. Lady Carstairs wondered that Jocelyn could tolerate such a person in the house.

After her bald introduction Jocelyn said nothing for a few minutes. She seemed as if she did not quite know what to do. The handsome, badly-dressed man gazed into the fire after he had acknowledged Lady Carstairs's bow, and there was a little smile on his lips. The group of men broke up and came towards Jocelyn, now that they saw her attention was no longer monopolised; the match footmen appeared on the scene; Lucy and Rose swept down the stairs in elegant tea-gowns, followed by the magenta cousin. Jocelyn found herself in the midst of them all, and was conscious that many curious glances were directed towards the flashily-dressed man, who stood on the hearth as though he were master of the situation.

She made a great effort.

"Mr. Dalgarno has consented to join my house-party, Aunt Grace," she said, moving towards the low tea-table with its matchless china and flashing silver. "I am sure he will be a great acquisition."

"Delighted to hear it, I am sure," murmured Lady Carstairs, with her eye-glass in her eye. She scrutinised the new-comer severely as Jocelyn performed the various introductions, and she again wondered that Miss Garth could tolerate him in the house.

Mr. Dalgarno was tall and dark, with sweeping moustaches and roving black eyes. In spite of the fact that his clothes were badly cut, and that he wore too much jewellery, the man was handsome in a certain coarse way.

Jocelyn poured out tea with her usual self-possession, and smiled and chatted as graciously as ever. Only Godfrey Wharton noticed that her eyes were heavier, and her cheeks paler, than they generally were.

"Have you a headache?" he asked her gently, as he stood by her to have his cup refilled.

"No—I think not, thank you," she answered rather absently.

He still stood by her when he had received his tea, and his attitude screened her somewhat from notice.

"I am sure something is the matter," he persisted, "you need not try to deceive me, Jocelyn. My eyes are sharp where you are concerned."

"They are sharp unnecessarily," she

answered wearily. "I feel as well as ever I felt in my life."

He stirred his tea round thoughtfully, and his eyes wandered to where Mr. Dalgarno was standing, making himself agreeable to Rose Carstairs.

"Where did that man spring from?" he asked suddenly, with a shrug of the shoulder in his direction.

"He 'sprang,' as you call it, from the village inn. He has been staying there some time, I believe. As he was an old friend of my brother's I asked him to come here instead," she answered, steadily. "Is that an entirely satisfactory report?"

Her voice was quiet, and so were her eyes, but it seemed to Godfrey Wharton that the quietness was forced. He abandoned his catechism, however.

After tea was over, some of the party adjourned to the billiard-room, others to the drawing-room, where they had a little impromptu dance as a kind of practice for the coming ball. Dalgarno, after a look at Jocelyn, went to the billiard-room. Miss Garth and her aunt were left alone.

Jocelyn knew that a searching examination was inevitable. She wished to get it over.

"And now, my dear Jocely," said Lady Carstairs, when the footmen had noiselessly removed all the glittering paraphernalia of the tea-table, "pray tell me, who is this mysterious stranger who has dropped upon us from the skies? I thought you told me that you did not expect anybody fresh?"

"I did not, Aunt Grace," said Jocelyn, answering the last question first, "but as Mr. Dalgarno must have been very uncomfortable at the village inn, I thought it would only be hospitable to invite him to stay here."

"But how did you come to be acquainted with him at all? You must know him very well, Jocelyn, before you ask him to your house."

"I used to know him very well years ago. He was one of poor Robert's friends."

Lady Carstairs coughed a little, and stretched out a shapely foot to the blaze, meditatively.

"But my dear—excuse me—but if you are going to take up with all your poor brother's wild friends you will fill your house with a very queer set of people. Robert was not quite irreproachable himself as you know. I suppose he met this man abroad?"

"I believe so."

"And then introduced him to you?"

"Yes."

"But that must have been years ago, Jocelyn!"

"Eight, I believe."

"Eight years ago, and the man presumes upon a slight acquaintance all that time since in order to force himself into your house! The thing is preposterous."

"I asked him to stay here, Aunt Grace."

"But I cannot allow your generosity to be so imposed on, my dear. You must remember you are a young and handsome woman, Jocelyn, and cannot be too careful of your reputation. The man is an atrocious cad I am sure. His hands look more as if he had been picking oakum than anything else."

Jocelyn suddenly turned away her head, and her aunt did not see the flush of crimson in her cheeks.

"You must have been quite a child when you met him! It is quite impossible we can keep up with all our childhood's friends, you know. It sounds very pretty, but it is not at all practicable. You had better let me speak to this Mr.—Mr.—Daglioni, and explain to him that under the present circumstances, although you desire to be kind, you cannot——"

Jocelyn interrupted her.

"You must not do anything of the sort, Aunt Grace. Mr. Dalgarno is my guest, and as such I must ask you to treat him."

Jocelyn's tone was very seldom haughty, but it was haughty now.

Lady Carstairs took on an injured air.

"Of course you know best, Jocelyn. You always do! But I should have thought you would have taken advice from one old enough to be your mother."

"This is not a case for advice," said Jocelyn, rising and leaving the hall abruptly.

She went straight to the billiard-room, where her new guest was playing a startling game with Godfrey Wharton. All the other men were looking on with some surprise. Dalgarno had made some extraordinary strokes.

He paused, cue in hand, when Jocelyn entered.

"Pray don't let me disturb you," said the latter, looking at him.

He muttered something she could not catch, and went on with the game. Jocelyn stood and watched it too. It seemed to her that it was more than a game that these two were playing—there was a deadly earnestness about it that struck her. She

walted with breathless superstition to see who would win.

They were neck and neck at last. Each only wanted three to win.

"Whom do you back?" asked Godfrey Wharton, pausing for a moment and looking at Jocelyn.

She raised her eyes to his, but did not answer. He turned to the table with a little smile—made a brilliant winning hazard—and the game was his.

Dalgarno threw down his cue viciously.

"My hand is out. It is seven years since I last played," he said, with his slight foreign accent, "and then I think Miss Garth has the evil eye. I was winning till she came."

Jocelyn did not answer. She was looking at him with a curious dilated gaze. Then she turned and went upstairs without another word. At the same moment the dressing bell sounded. Dalgarno started and shivered a little.

"What's that?" he demanded abruptly of the nearest person, who happened to be Edgar Carstairs.

The young man stared at him.

"What? The dressing bell?" he said uncomprehendingly.

"Oh, the dressing bell is it? It makes an infernal noise, that's all that I can say. I'm as nervous as a cat to-night."

"Nervous?"

Edgar Carstairs looked him carefully up and down, and wondered privately what made Jocelyn Garth introduce this particularly loose fish into her fastidious home.

"Yes, nervous. You'd be nervous if you had been gold-mining in Africa for years, and been nearly killed by fevers and agues a dozen times over."

He followed the men upstairs, still with a furtive look of terror on his face. The hall was empty save for the white-robed form of Jocelyn Garth. The others passed on, but Dalgarno lingered.

"You dress every night here?" he demanded.

"Yes; you will find all you need in the Blue Room. You know where it is."

"You've got an uncommonly swell place here," said Dalgarno, glancing round admiringly at the richly decorated walls.

"I am glad you think so."

"Oh, it's a handsome house; and you make a very handsome mistress of it! You have very much improved, Jocelyn!"

"I am delighted to hear it."

"Oh, you needn't take on those icy, confoundedly proud don't-careish airs with

me. The truth's got to come out sooner or later."

"I will discuss matters with you to-morrow."

"By the Lord, you are a cool one! I thought I should have startled you, walking in like that, and you never turned a hair."

"Why should I? It is only the realisation of a nightmare that I have dreamed for years."

"Nightmare? You were fond enough of me in the old days, my girl! When you dreamed of me then you didn't call it a nightmare."

She shuddered a little. He approached her with a laugh, and tried to take her hand. She stepped back with a look that checked even him.

"If you dare to touch me I will call my servants and have you put out of the house. I have still some authority left, and I am mistress here."

He gave a sullen laugh.

"As you choose," he answered, turning on his heel. "I will humour you for a day or two if you like."

He whistled a bar from a comic song that was popular seven years ago, as he went up the broad oak stairs.

He had a distinct sense of "bien être" as he entered his luxurious bedroom. The delicate hangings, handsome furniture, and ruddy blazing fire were all very pleasant to him.

"After all these years I deserve comfortable quarters," he told himself. "A man might do worse than come home to this—and Jocelyn."

Dinner was rather a strained affair. Jocelyn, in black, looked white and worn. Dalgarno laughed and talked noisily, and had his glass filled dangerously often. The guests were all rather displeased at the strange, unwelcome addition to their ranks that Jocelyn Garth had thrust upon them.

"Where have you put that new protégé of yours?" enquired Lady Carstairs, when the dessert had arrived, and Dalgarno was at his gayest.

"In the Blue Room."

"Next mine?" with a little shriek. "My dear Jocelyn, how very inconsiderate of you! I shan't sleep a wink to-night. The wretch looks quite capable of cutting my throat."

"He hasn't murdered any one yet that I know of, Aunt Grace."

"That you know of! I dare say not. But that is very insecure evidence. You admit that you have not seen him for eight years——"

"Seven."

"Well, seven then. I understood you to say eight, I'm sure. A man has time to commit hundreds of murders in seven years."

Jocelyn sat silent again.

"All that jewellery of his is false," went on Lady Carstairs, "and I am quite sure his clothes are second-hand. If we all escape with our lives we ought to feel thankful. I shall put my diamonds in your big safe to-night."

A very faint smile curved Jocelyn's lips.

"I will guarantee the safety of your necklace, Aunt Grace."

"I don't feel at all comfortable, I assure you, my dear. The man is quite a Mephistopheles in appearance. How long is he to stay? He is spoiling everybody's pleasure. Edgar is horrified about it."

"Edgar must learn to respect my guests," said Jocelyn icily.

"Oh, but that's quite impossible in this case, my dear. The man has C A D printed all over him in large letters."

"Perhaps it is because those are his initials, aunt," said Jocelyn, with another of those wintry smiles that made Godfrey Wharton's heart ache as he watched her.

"Are they really? Well, I call that positively an inspiration of Providence—or his parents. I suppose it was his parents who christened him?"

"I suppose so."

The conversation dropped. But later on, in the drawing-room, Lady Carstairs was bristling with indignation again.

Dalgarno, who had had more wine than was good for him, chose to come and plant himself on a chair close by where she and her niece were talking confidentially together. Lady Carstairs drew her skirts aside ostentatiously.

"Oh, there's plenty of room," said Dalgarno, with a coarse laugh. "I can sit a littlenearer Miss Garth if you are so pressed. I dare say she won't mind."

Jocelyn sat like a statue, hardly breathing for a moment. She knew that Godfrey Wharton was standing by and had heard the remark.

"Would you like me to throw the fellow out of the window?" he suggested to Jocelyn, in a tone perfectly audible to Dalgarno.

The latter laughed again.

"Yes, ask her!" he said insolently, twirling his fierce moustache with his scarred and seamy fingers, "ask her by all means, and see what she will say."

Godfrey's eyes were on Jocelyn's face. He made a step forward.

"No—no," said Jocelyn, putting out her hand. "I do not want a scene."

"I cannot stand by and see you insulted."

"He does not mean it—he does not know what he is saying," she answered in a low voice. "Don't you see that he has had too much to drink?"

"All the more reason why——"

Dalgarno, leaning back, surveyed the pair with a smile.

"Miss Garth and I understand one another," he remarked coolly, "and we don't want any interference from you, young man."

Again Godfrey's eyes sought hers. Why was she so completely in the power of this man?

"I cannot stand this," he said hoarsely.

"You must—for my sake," she said piteously. Then turning to Dalgarno, she said, in a different tone:

"I shall be glad if you will withdraw for this evening, Mr. Dalgarno. You are excited, and say things which are best unsaid."

"I shall not go! I have a right——"

Her eyes met the bold flashing ones fearlessly.

"You will go—and now!" she said quietly. "Come with me!"

She rose as she spoke. Dalgarno got up too.

"With you?" he cried with a tipsy hiccough. "That's a very different thing. Of course I'll go with you, pretty one—anywhere, to the world's end!"

As they left the room together Godfrey Wharton felt a sudden deadly faintness steal over him. She was in the power of this scoundrel—alone with him!

"Shall I follow them?" he asked Lady Carstairs in a voice that trembled with emotion.

"Oh, don't ask me!" said her ladyship, with a disdainful shrug of her silken shoulders; "Jocelyn is quite beyond me I confess. I suppose the cultivation of drunken gamblers is her latest fad. I will have nothing to do with the matter."

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.
BY ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII. LEARNING HER PART.

PENELOPE bore the ordeal of dress with as much patience as she possessed. She did not fully understand her own beauty, and she thought that dress would make her more attractive and more likely to succeed in the object that had brought her and her uncle to London.

She felt more and more like a prisoner, as she realised that Mrs. Todd's society rules were very tiresome. She must take care of her complexion, she must not be seen before her attire was perfect, and she must have her dresses described by the society papers.

The country maiden was too proud to show her surprise at the new code of behaviour that was poured into her ears, so that Mrs. Todd, besides admiring her beauty, looked upon her as the most self-contained girl she had ever met, and silently wondered at her self-possession and worldliness. The first day she had been inclined to think this romantic Princess slightly wanting in animation, but having hinted that cheerfulness and smiles were great helps to social success, she saw Penelope's eyes suddenly flash, as she said :

"Even if they mean nothing ?"

"They mean, of course, that a woman is glad she is pleasing others."

"I don't know yet if I can please, but I shall be very glad if I succeed."

Mrs. Todd was silenced when she heard her own code explained so baldly.

"We women have to pretend a great deal, my dear; in fact, we are always pretending, I suppose, but it pleases the men. We pretend that we think them good and clever, when in reality very few of them possess either quality, and none of them have both together."

Lady Farrant came the next day to call upon Miss Winskell. She had heard so much of her from the Duke, that she had told her husband that the girl was probably neither clever nor beautiful.

Lady Farrant belonged to the modern type of society. She was an heiress who had taken care that her fortune should be well secured, for she did not mean to be beggared by an easy-going husband.

"Bob is a jolly good fellow," she told her intimates, "but no more fit to handle money than to be Prime Minister." She had promised to keep the house going in proper style, but she would not pay his private bills when he ran short, and somehow Bob was always "running short," or he was lavishly generous. He loved gambling, but so long as he kept within due bounds his wife did not lecture him.

When Lady Farrant entered the Eaton Square drawing-room of the Winskells', and saw before her a tall girl with exquisite hair; dark, liquid eyes; a beautiful mouth and a strong chin; she almost stopped short from surprise and delight.

"What a lucky find! The men were right. The girl will make a sensation, and I shall have the credit of bringing her out."

She thought this and then greeted her with a great show of affection, but suddenly remembering the fact that the Princess was poor, she was more cautious than she had at first intended.

"Milly Todd has told me how quite delighted she is to be with you, Miss Winskell. I can trust her to tell you all that is necessary. Have you given all the orders about the Drawing-room dress, Milly? Your young friend must enjoy herself, and I predict a great success for her."

"It is very kind of you to take so much trouble for me. I know my uncle's friends have been very kind," said Penelope.

"Yes, of course. Bob said it was quite a joke his turning up after all these years. Oh, you will soon be 'au fait' at everything. Girls in our own day catch up all the right things in no time. We are to have several 'lions' at the ball. I think young people ought to enjoy themselves. I take care that the men dance and don't stand doing nothing in the doorways. When people tell me that young men are not as they used to be, I tell them it's their own fault. It's no use spoiling them. I give them good warning when they come to our house that there is no standing room for them. I give a ball for my guests to dance, otherwise they must keep away. I never have any trouble, and the girls have real good times—just as I had when I was young."

Lady Farrant flowed on like a swift though not a noisy stream, and was less tiresome to listen to than was Mrs. Todd.

"By the way, Milly, I have invited the Duke to our small dinner-party on Saturday. It's only a men's party, and I leave them alone; but my brother will escort us to the play. Irving is playing *Wolsley* on that day, and it will interest Miss Winskell. Do you like plays?"

"I have never been to one," said Penelope; "this is my first visit to London."

Lady Farrant smiled good-naturedly.

"Well! really! It is quite delightful to have a perfectly unsophisticated 'débutante.' I give you ten days to become worldly, and the change will be amusing."

"She is worldly already," said Mrs. Todd, smiling.

Penelope felt quite out of her element with these women; but she listened, and learnt her new part. She had imposed this task on herself and meant to learn it well. Then suddenly she lost herself in the day dreams she had conjured up on the hillside. She could not realise yet that the old life was gone. She would go back to her glen, but would she then be another Penelope? The thought seemed to take away all the old moorings, at the same

time that it made her stretch out her hand towards them. This big, new world she saw now was peopled with persons who did not seem to have any strong purpose; they appeared to be like toy boats on the sea, driven hither and thither almost aimlessly, except when forced forward by the impetus of the tide.

If she meant to attain her object she must become like them, so they said; she must appear light-hearted, and she must laugh. Her uncle, who had done so much for her, should not be disappointed. He had taken so much trouble and such infinite pains, that on her side she must do her best to please him. What was love in comparison with the welfare of the Winskells? The property must soon be sold if—if—

The Princess had only to think of that and all her courage revived. She would not shrink from the task set before her.

A week later Penelope Winskell had won the difficult position of a recognised society beauty. How it had ever been accomplished was a mystery to herself, though Mrs. Todd thought it was owing to her own management, and to Lady Farrant's "able steering," as she expressed it.

It is not by any means every beautiful girl who comes to London with the secret wish to become fashionable who attains this object.

With Penelope Winskell there were several things which contributed to the desired end. In the first place she was certainly beautiful, and possessed a complexion which had resisted her out-of-door life, and so could resist London fatigue. In the second place, society was half amused, half credulous, and wholly pleased by the quiet manner with which the Winskells claimed their titles of courtesy.

The handsome Duke accompanying his beautiful niece also helped to conquer society, and very soon, in that mysterious manner the origin of which is unknown, the whisper ran:

"Have you seen the Princess?"

"What Princess? Who is she?"

"Oh, don't you know? She belongs to a very ancient family who possess titles, by courtesy of course."

Every one wished to see the Princess, and invitation cards were showered down upon the house in Eston Square where she was known to be residing for the season. Carriages drove up in a greedy

array, and Lady Farrant and Mrs. Todd began to congratulate themselves that they had nobly launched Penelope Winakell.

Instead of despising the country girl, Mrs. Todd began to shower compliments upon her, which Penelope received with the same quiet coldness as she had accepted the information that she was very countrified. She had her aim in view, and to her Mrs. Todd was of no consequence whatever. Still the battle was not yet won. The Princess had not been written about in all the society papers, so Lady Farrant determined to give a fête—she liked the word better than a party—and to make the papers mention “the unique guest,” as she herself had named her.

As for Penelope herself, she had one happy hour in the day. This was the hour before dinner, when she sat with her uncle and talked over what she had seen and done during the day. He could not help noticing the change in her—the sparkle in her eyes, the style added to her natural graceful figure, and the brighter repartee. She was learning the ways of the world, and learning the lesson quickly. Once, after one of Penelope’s quaint little satirical sketches, he caught himself making a mental comparison between the Princess in the glen and the one now in town.

“Well, Penzie, so the big world does not seem to you quite so much like a prison now as it did at first. Look at this evening’s society paper; you head the list of——”

Penelope put the paper away with her hand. Her pride revolted against common notice.

“You are glad about it, uncle. You know that is all I care for. We went to two ‘at homes’ to-day, and I was introduced to a great many persons I did not care about. But I wanted to show you all these cards. Our neighbours are beginning to call in crowds. These are cards from Lord and Lady Rookwood. Isn’t he a cousin of that Mr. Bethune whom Mr. Gillbanks mentioned? Some one said so.”

The Duke examined the cards deliberately.

“Yes. By the way, I heard again of this young Bethune somewhere the other day. A very modern excitable young man who goes in for Socialistic ideas.”

“But you said he belonged to an old family.”

“Yes, certainly he does, but Socialism

is fashionable. Young men think the reformer’s vocabulary will bring them into notice. In my youth we kept people of that stamp in their right place.”

“I will ask Mrs. Todd to come and return the call; I should like to see Mr. Bethune. If he talks to me I could tell him how mistaken you think him.”

The Duke smiled.

“I fear he is too far gone, unless——”

The Duke paused. Then he added carelessly:

“They are, as a family, very much impoverished by the failure of their land, I hear. Besides, they were never very rich.”

Penelope took one of her uncle’s hands in hers. The look of love in her eyes was reserved for him alone. Indeed, in Penelope’s life, he alone could call up that look. She had, however, hardly listened to his last remark, being anxious about another matter.

“Where did you go last night, uncle, when we were at the theatre? Lady Farrant brought her son with her. He tried to amuse us, but I was so much interested in the play that I hardly answered his remarks.”

“That youth has not half his mother’s wits!”

“But where were you? I thought you would be at home when we came back.”

“Ah! I was rather late. We have a little club for whist playing, and, yes, we stayed rather late. Do you think I show signs of weariness?” he asked, a little anxiously.

“No—I hope not, because you are doing it for me.”

“Well, the doing seems pleasant enough, child. Don’t trouble your head about me. Enjoy yourself. That is all I ask of you.”

Penelope stood up and laughed.

“I am doing that; yes, I wonder at myself, but I try not to think of the glen and of the Rothery. If I begin to think, then I hear it splashing, and then I fancy I am walking straight up the path, and that I am standing on the hillside looking at the tops of the mountains, just as the last gleam of gold has faded away.”

“Poetry is at a discount in this big city,” said the Duke, with one of his ironical smiles. “Now, I will accompany you to the ball this evening. You are a fortunate individual. Do you know, Lord Rookwood’s house is one of the most sought after in town.”

“Perhaps I shall see the Bethunes

there. Do you think we shall meet Mr. Gillbanks again? Surely he is not in good society!"

"Oh, he is immensely rich—I told you so. The firm has money enough to buy up all Mr. Bethune's estates if it liked."

Penelope raised her head alightlly.

"But people cannot care about a 'nouveau riche.'"

The Duke said nothing, but shrugged his shoulders. During the dinner-hour he was rather silent, and Mrs. Todd enjoyed almost a solo.

"You will look charming, my dear Princess, in that cloud of blue, as if a bit of the sky had suddenly descended. They say that Lady Rookwood is a very jealous woman, and will not let her husband talk to the pretty girls. We must not go late to the Rookwoods'; they are people who like punctuality, which the fast set despise, but they are very proper people, though quite a young couple. Now I must help the maid to see to our dresses. I am glad your uncle will come with us, for his presence makes the 'éclat' greater."

So she prattled on, but the Duke and Penelope were no longer listening.

PREACHING AND PREACHERS.

WHAT cleric was it who asked Garrick how it was that actors affected, or seemed to affect, their hearers so much more than preachers? There was some truth in Garrick's reply: "Because we speak of unreal things as if they were real, while you speak of real things as if they were unreal." It certainly is a fact that the average sermon, to say the best of it, is delivered as if it were a lesson learned by rote, and not a favourite lesson either. Few and far between are the preachers who preach as if they were themselves impressed by the truth, the reality, and the paramount importance of what they themselves are preaching. I have heard famous preachers in many different parts of the world, but I think that I should not require more than the fingers of one hand to enable me to number those who struck me as feeling what they themselves were saying.

Eloquent preachers one has heard in plenty. Not a few, too, who have attained to a high standard of eloquence. But something more than eloquence is needed if one wishes one's words to leave

an impression, either for good or for ill, upon the lives of one's hearers. Eloquence is an intellectual exercise. It is not merely by means of an intellectual exercise that one gains an entrance to men's hearts. The actor knows this. He appeals to the feelings. He wishes his hearers to believe that he feels strongly; knowing that, if he can only induce that belief in them, they will feel strongly too.

It is true that there are preachers who appeal to the feelings. So far they go with the actor. Unfortunately for themselves, and for the cause which they profess to have at heart, as a rule they go no farther. They appear to be oblivious of the fact that, in order to appeal strongly to the feelings of others, it is necessary, first of all, to feel oneself. In the case of the actor it is only the appearance, the close imitation of feeling, which is absolutely requisite. In the case of the preacher no imitation, however close, will do at all. It must be the genuine thing.

The reason of this is simple. An audience goes to a theatre desiring to be deceived. If what took place upon the stage were real, the performance would not be suffered to continue for a moment. If we knew that the actor who impersonates Macbeth had really slain the actor who impersonates Duncan, not improbably the representative of the Thane of Cawdor would be lynched upon the spot. If the villain of melodrama really perpetrated, night after night, a tithe of the villainies of which he is supposed to be guilty, a frenzied mob would raze the theatre to the ground. We know that we are only looking on at make-believe, and it is because we know it that we wish those who are making believe to do it well.

In the case of the preacher it is all the other way. We do not go to the preacher to be deceived. We go to be convinced. In the pulpit acting is not only ineffective, it is worse than ineffective. Instead of gaining our sympathies it repels them. The idea that a man is endeavouring to convince us by pretending to be convinced himself, so far from propitiating us, rouses our indignation. It is almost impossible to conceal the fact that it is pretence. The actor has everything in his favour when he attempts concealment; the preacher, or the orator, has nothing. The assumption of disguise, the arrangement of the lights, the whole construction of the theatre, these things

are all intended to assist illusion; in the pulpit, or on the platform, everything tends to destroy it. More, should there, in the pulpit, be any attempt to assist illusion, even in the slightest degree, so far from welcoming it, we should resent the attempt with scorn, and with disgust.

No. The preacher must produce his effects naturally; from within, not from without. Art can do nothing for him. He may polish his phrases as he pleases; it is doubtful if they will gain him access to a single heart that is worth the entering. He may cultivate emotion, he may simulate hysterics; neither the one nor the other will get him "forrarder."

Let there be no misunderstanding; it is not suggested that a "fool preacher" may not influence fools. Still less is such a suggestion made of knaves. Mr. Honeyman is found in the present year of grace, outside the pages of Thackeray's novel. But Mr. Honeyman appeals, and always will appeal, to a peculiar congregation. The fools we have always with us. It is because this is an eternal truth that Mr. Honeyman still lives, moves, and has his being. But no lasting impression was ever made upon a large body of persons by the Mr. Honeymans. Such an effect is more likely to be produced by the Joe Smiths. They, at least, have the courage of their convictions—or of what they declare to be their convictions.

If the tales which are handed down to us of the effects which were produced by Savonarola are not exaggerated, we may take it for granted that those effects were produced, not by his eloquence, but by his earnestness. In one respect his age was very much like ours. Earnestness was perhaps as rare in Florence as it is in England now. A man in real earnest, especially a man of genius in real earnest, was a phenomenon indeed.

One hears a great deal about the lack of good preachers. I, for my part, wonder what people mean when they speak of good preachers. Do they mean eloquent preachers? It is beyond dispute that eloquence is not given to every man, but still, there are to-day eloquent preachers in all the countries of the world. Do they mean scholarly preachers? They, too, are to be found. I myself have heard, in churches and chapels of all denominations, men who, judged by average standards, might fairly be called good preachers. It might be invidious to name names, but is there a sect in England

which cannot claim to have good preachers? I have heard orators in Roman Catholic churches, many of them. I have heard them in Protestant churches and chapels. Ay, and I have heard them at street-corners.

But the average standard is not necessarily a high standard. What, judged by the highest standard, is a good preacher? A good preacher is, or should be, a man who so demonstrates a thing that all who listen to his demonstration shall accept it as proved. A good preacher is, therefore, a man who does this superlatively well. How many good preachers, judged by that standard, have we in the present year of grace? If a man tells you that good is better than evil, and demonstrates this clearly, it is certain, if you are offered the choice of one of the two, that you will choose the good. How is it that so many people choose the evil? There is an abundance of preachers. They preach to us on every topic beneath the sun. Is it because the preachers are bad, their demonstrations imperfect?

One is sometimes constrained to think that if there were fewer preachers, and if they preached to us on fewer topics, the result of their preaching would be more. It is not only that they contradict each other. It is not only that some speak faintly on just those points on which others shout out loudest. There are so many of them. There is not a road, not even a footpath, on which they will let us walk alone. There are too many guides. They not only want to guide us up the Matterhorn, they insist upon guiding us up Primrose Hill. The people of this world are becoming divided into two parts: those who are preachers, and those who are not. Those who are not preachers are not only in a minority, it would almost seem as if they were in a minority which is growing less and less. Soon the preachers will have no one to preach to but each other. Then there will be peace in all the land.

Under such circumstances is it not allowable to suggest that there may be cause for thankfulness in the fact that the good preachers are few and far between? If they were all good preachers, where should we be? If each one of them with whom we came in contact were to be endowed with the power to move us to conviction, what kaleidoscopic lives we should be compelled to lead! There is a story told somewhere of a certain individual who went on a journey round the

world. He must have been a person with what has been called, of late, an "open mind," or else he must have encountered "persuaders" of exceptional calibre. He was not a traveller, properly so termed. He was what we style a "globe-trotter." He ran round the world in a year, or thereabouts, as, nowadays, so many people do. And yet, by the time he returned from whence he came, he had been "converted," it would almost seem, to every creed under the sun.

This individual, whom we will call Perkins, started as an Episcopalian. On the outward voyage he colloqued with a Presbyterian missionary. This missionary was such a powerful proselytiser that, by the time they reached Cairo, Mr. Perkins was a Presbyterian. He sojourned in Egypt. While there he fell in with a young Mahometan gentleman, who made so strong an impression on his mind that, by the time he continued his journey, he would have been willing to suffer martyrdom for the truth of the saying, "There is only one God, and Mahomet is his prophet." It chanced that, on the ship which took them to Ceylon, there was a member of the Society of Jesus, a charming man. He made a constant companion of Mr. Perkins. When the ship touched at Colombo, Mr. Perkins had again undergone conversion. He had pinned his faith to the Sovereign Pontiff, believing him to be the Keeper of the Keys. He had become a Buddhist, not an Esoteric Buddhist, after the Blavatsky - Olcott pattern, but a real, "whole hog" Buddhist, before he left the land of "spicy breezes." While steaming to Calcutta, a Unitarian carried conviction both to his heart and to his intellect. He became a Parsee while in the "City of Palaces," possibly yielding to some occult fascination exercised by the near neighbourhood of the Towers of Silence. When he arrived at Melbourne he was a Hard-shell Baptist. He was several things while in Australia. Falling in love, as he was leaving it, with a Jewess, he almost became a Jew. But, on her throwing him over, he meditated attaching himself to the Greek Church, probably because he had in his mind's eye the Russian persecution of the Jews, and, at least in that respect, he would have liked to have allied himself with the subjects of the Czar. When he landed at San Francisco he was an avowed Free-thinker. Between the Golden Horn and Sandy Hook he was so many different

things that it would be difficult to give a list of them.

You think that Mr. Perkins must have been a curious character? True. He must have been. Yet, if good preachers abounded, say, even to the extent of one per cent. of the whole company of the preachers, we might be as he was. Indeed, we probably should be as he was. We should chop and change, and change and chop. We should undergo as many variations as there are hairs in our head. Our only safety would be to confine ourselves to a given groove. Having been convinced by Mr. Boanerges, if we wished to maintain our character for mental stability, we should be unwise to trust ourselves out of the range of the voice of Mr. Boanerges, lest, coming within sound of the voice of Mr. Smoothtongue, we should immediately become converts to the other side. No. Considering all things, regarding the question from a wide and a comprehensive point of view, it is, perhaps, not an unmitigated misfortune that good preachers are not more abundant than they are.

Still, on the other hand, one is entitled to wish that some of them were better than they are. Surely, if a nincompoop is out of place anywhere, it is in the pulpit. And yet it is amazing what a number of nincompoops are to be found there. A man may be, and, indeed, often is, a good person and a bad preacher. Until it is understood that a parson need not preach unless he can preach, and yet shall have no cause to be ashamed, we shall have to bear the ills we have. This really is a subject on which a little plain speaking is required. If a man were to turn author, and were to publish works which only went to show that he had absolutely no knowledge of grammar, of the rules of composition, or of spelling: that, in short, he was absolutely without knowledge of any sort or kind: to put it mildly, we should smile at him. Yet, when a man of this type sets himself up to preach, some people seem to think that we ought to hold the man in reverence. Which resolves itself into this: if a man is too great a fool to make a mark at anything else, he is sure to make his mark at preaching. Strange logic, surely! No wonder the bad preachers are as the sands of the sea for multitude.

It is bad enough to encounter preachers of the impossible type in open spaces, or at street-corners. It is worse when we are confronted by them in the pulpits of our

churches and our chapels. It would be interesting, in this connection, to ascertain what exactly are the qualifications which each of the denominations expects its preachers to possess. One may be forgiven for surmising that the only qualification which the Church of England insists upon is a social one. It should be remembered that a social qualification necessitates a certain degree of education, but one so often finds in church pulpits preachers who have gentlemanly manners and, apparently, nothing else! Something more than gentlemanly manners is required in a preacher. The Congregational standard is, in one sense, a much higher one. With the Congregational minister preaching is all in all. If he cannot preach he is foredoomed to failure. You never meet in Congregational pulpits quite such bad preachers as you meet in Episcopalian ones. On the other hand, the Congregational minister is seldom much above the level of his congregation. This follows as a matter of course, since each congregation chooses the minister who, at their price, is most to their taste. The best preachers get the best incomes. Therefore, again, it follows that the poorest congregations are only too apt to get the worst preachers. Wesleyan Methodism is a compromise between church and chapel. At any rate, congregations do not choose their own ministers. Still, they are allowed a certain amount of variety, and are not constrained to always listen to the same incapable. It would be impossible, perhaps, to say in a few words what the Wesleyan minister's qualification exactly is, but it certainly is not a preaching one. I have heard as bad preachers in Wesleyan pulpits as it would be possible to hear. On the other hand, it is only fair to add that I have heard many whom it would be hard to beat. In the Roman Catholic Church a priest is not by any means necessarily a preacher. It is possible that he has never preached a sermon in his life, and that he never will. A sermon is very far from being an essential part of the Roman ritual. The consequence is that when you do hear a sermon in a Catholic Church, you are pretty certain not to be confronted by the spectacle of a man attempting to do something for which, either by nature or by education, he is altogether unsuited.

If you think it out, the odd part of the business is that no one criticises a preacher so keenly as his own congregation. For this, doubtless, there is sufficient reason.

It is upon them, first and foremost, that the burden is laid. The chief topic of conversation at the congregations, whether of churches or of chapels, are walking home after service, is the sermon. If the preacher has made a hash of it, as, in the estimation of some of his hearers, he is almost certain to have done, how frank, how outspoken, the criticisms are! Do not suppose that congregations do not know when they have a bad preacher. They know it well—too well. And yet they suffer. And they go on suffering. It does not appear to have occurred to any one that bad preachers should not be encouraged to preach.

But if the professional preacher is, now and then, slightly trying, the amateur preacher is, almost invariably, altogether intolerable. And it is the voice of the amateur preacher which, nowadays, is heard in all the land. He does not necessarily touch on theological topics. Morals and social subjects are more in his line. Not long since I was at a friend's house. After supper some one said something about vaccination. Suddenly a man began to hurl statistics and statements at our heads in a fashion which paralysed us all. He was an amateur preacher, whose line was anti-vaccination. He was one against many, yet the many were beaten by the one. I know nothing about anti-vaccination, I want to know nothing. It is not a subject for which I am desirous either to live or to die. I had no moral doubt that all his statistics were wrong, and his statements too, though I was not able there and then to prove them wrong.

On this point I once heard rather a good story of how an amateur preacher was hoisted by his own petard.

This amateur's topic was opium. "Down with opium, the curse of India, China, and other countries!" and that sort of thing. It was in a private company. He had been reeling off the usual mass of figures, and as no one knew anything about the subject except himself, or cared anything for it either, his figures held the field, until a man, who had hitherto been silent, began to speak. He directly controverted that amateur preacher's statements. He, too, produced figures of his own. The amateur preacher was first amazed, then cowed, then roused to battle. The figures which the assailants hurled at each other darkened the air. But the amateur preacher's were no match for the other man's. We asked

that other man, the amateur preacher being gone, whence his figures came. He told us from his own head. They were the inventions of the moment. Seeing that we wondered, he explained that he had had a considerable experience of amateur preachers. He had suffered from them, sorely. And his sufferings had taught him that amateur preachers were apt to get up their sermons, for that is what too often they amount to, in an amateur sort of way. Their figures, imperfectly assimilated at first, become more and more dubious quantities as time goes on, until very shortly they become, as they well may become, so uncertain of the literal correctness of their own figures, that they are altogether incapable of proving the incorrectness of the figures of others. Therefore, when an amateur preacher begins to hurl figures, this man hurls figures back again, inventing them as he goes on—exhibiting considerable mental agility in the process, too. Nine times out of ten the amateur preacher is confounded.

I have taken this story to heart. When my maiden aunt, who is an amateur preacher of a particularly painful kind, throws teetotal statistics at my head, I throw what I hope I may, without impropriety, call alcoholic statistics—little inventions of my own—back at hers. They confuse her dreadfully, and I have noticed that she is becoming less and less inclined to preach at me.

Bi-metallism is a subject upon which, just now, amateur preachers are holding forth. I never met a bi-metallist—or, for the matter of that, a monometallist either—whose arguments I could not rout, acting on the afore-mentioned gentleman's hint. Not that I know anything about bi-metallism. I do not. Indeed I am arriving by degrees at the fixed conviction that no one knows anything about bi-metallism. No, not one. I have met men who are supposed to be authorities on the subject, but I never yet met one who was able to make it really clear to the understandings of others, or even to make it clear that he really and truly understood it himself.

It certainly does seem to be at least probable that the less some amateur preachers know about their subjects, the more dogmatic they are apt to be upon them. I am acquainted with one of the fraternity whose subject is criminal reform. His idea is—I do not know where he

got it from, but I presume from somewhere—that the less you punish criminals, the more likely you are to diminish crime. So far from punishing an offender against the law, you are to make a sort of pet of him. You are to take him away from his criminal associations, and introduce him to respectable houses and model families, and so instil into him imperceptibly, by force of example, a love of higher things. It seems to be rather a funny idea to me, and based on an insufficient knowledge of human nature. But I may not have got it quite correctly. His elucidation of the idea is a very trying one to listen to. But I do know that he supports it, or at least that he imagines that he supports it, by an appalling display of statistics. The word appalling is used advisedly. He is one of those persons who, directly they come into contact with questions of arithmetic, are immediately at sea. The mess he makes of those statistics is horrible to witness. This is the sort of thing :

"Last year there were three thousand four hundred and seventy-eight convictions of all sorts. Of these twelve thousand nine hundred and seventy-six were for misdemeanours, twenty-nine thousand five hundred and thirty were for felony, and the rest were for drunkenness. Of the convictions for drunkenness thirty-six thousand four hundred and ninety-seven were first convictions, while the balance of no less than sixty-seven thousand eight hundred and twenty-three had been convicted more than once. Now for the due and proper custody of these criminals there were required five thousand seven hundred and twenty-nine prisons, and one hundred and forty-four warders and other officers. The total cost to the nation was, in round figures, half a million sterling, or fourteen shillings and threepence per head per annum, or nineteen pounds eighteen shillings and twopence per week; while the sum paid in salaries alone amounted to over a couple of millions. If these were placed side by side they would form a tower three feet wide and eighteen thousand feet thick. While if the pounds were reduced to sovereigns—I mean, that is, if the pennies were reduced to pounds, and were placed one above the other, they would form a bridge across the Channel a hundred feet long, and five-and-twenty miles in width. Now, if you come to consider—what did I say was the number of first offenders?"

He pauses. He consults his notes; then

his memory. It is difficult to say which muddles him most. Yet he maunders on. There is nothing to show that he would not maunder on for ever if he could get any one to listen.

The man is sane—the picture is, perhaps, a little over-coloured. But he is as incapable of preaching, as he himself might say, in one of his paroxysms of muddle, as the “beasts of the air.” Preach he will. What is more, he meditates standing for Parliament, with the view of pressing his theories on the attention of the representatives of the nation. It is a fact. There will be some pleasant hours in that abode of pleasantness when he gets there.

I once answered an advertisement which stated that a furnished house was to let. The house was in the country. I was to meet the proprietor in town, and we were to go down together to see it. When I met him he asked me if I did not know his name—which, we will say, was Jones. I observed that I did not remember having heard it before. He appeared surprised.

“I thought everybody knew it by now. I’ve been at it long enough.”

“At what?” I asked.

“Preaching the doctrine of Art for the Elevation and Regeneration of the Masses.”

“Oh!” I said.

He explained. It seemed that he was of opinion that if every wall—the walls of our living-rooms, sleeping-rooms, kitchens, offices, churches, chapels, public buildings—were covered, from floor to ceiling, with pictures, the effect on the lives of those who had to live with them would, in time, be indescribable. I felt that it would, though perhaps not altogether in the direction he suggested. He went on to add that he had put his theory into practice in the house which we were then going to see. I looked forward to the worst—or I thought I did. My anticipations, however, fell far short of the reality. Anything like the “pictures” with which he had covered the walls of the house which he wanted to let, furnished, with them as part of the furniture, I never saw. And the way in which they were hung! There was not an inch of space between any two of them. They concealed the walls like a mosaic. And the miscreant told me, actually with a chuckle, that there were, I don’t know how many hundreds, or thousands, of them, and that, though they were all “real” oil paintings, they had only “stood him in, frame and

all,” I think, something like eight and sixpence apiece. Seldom have I breathed more freely than when I quitted that “picture” haunted house.

If the cobbler would but stick to his last! If people would only leave preaching to those who are competent to preach! I take it that it is to indulge in a wild dream to hope that they ever will. Preaching lends a man an air of importance, or he thinks that it does. And we do so like to think ourselves important!

THE AMERICAN HOUSE BEAUTIFUL.

THE untravelled or travelled and unobservant Briton cannot associate the traditional American whom he accepts as a type—and we all know how exceedingly true to nature all traditional national types are!—with the smallest ideas of poetry, imagination, or “soul.” To the said Briton, dollars, their making and their spending, are the sole reason for the American’s existence on this earth. Strange to say, although the Briton is not quite right, he is by no means entirely wrong. Dollars are the essence of the lives of five Americans out of six. They think dollars; they talk dollars; and, no doubt, they dream dollars. But the brightness of the exception goes far to redeem the national character, and more, is rapidly softening the natures of the dollar men. The publication of American magazines in England first showed us that there was plenty of “soul” in the lucre-adoring people across the Atlantic. The marvellous display at the World’s Fair proved to us that Americans possess, not merely a soul to appreciate the imaginative and the beautiful, but the faculty of expressing it in more solid form than print and engraving. As a finishing lesson we would recommend to the still doubtful Briton an examination of the American House Beautiful, in the honest conviction that no absolutely prosaic mind could find pleasure in beautiful surroundings.

We Englishmen are proud, and justly so, of the stately and the cottage homes of our land. There is nothing like them elsewhere in the world, for they possess peculiar features of their own—the former in their antiquity and their associations, the latter in their own beauty and that of their surroundings. But the great mass of us live neither in stately homes nor in

cottages, and of our residences—externally, at any rate—we have very small reason to be proud. Now, as the Americans have no stately homes of our English type, with the exception of the fine old Colonial residences of Virginia and New England; and as their cottage homes are modern, practical, and consequently ugly, and, as we have said, there is a wealth of refinement in many American minds, they have succeeded in making the villa residences of their big city suburbs the most beautiful in the world. I call them “villa residences,” despite the fact that many of them are mansions in size and feature, because they are the homes of business men. The town residences of American business men are beautiful internally; but being in streets and rows they necessarily lack the external features which induce us to select the suburban home as a type of the American House Beautiful.

In a survey of these the first fact which strikes the eye of the stranger is the extraordinary fertility of the American architectural brain in original design. A family likeness pervades all London suburban houses, be they north or south of the Thames. If there be one pretty house, there will be scores exactly like it all around; but until within the past very few years the London suburban builder reared as fast, as cheaply, and, in consequence, as inartistically as he could, with the result that the very great majority of London suburban houses are absolutely hideous. But in an American suburb, let us say for example, Brookline, near Boston, a suburb extending over miles of hill and dale, and planted thickly with houses, it may be asserted that not half-a-dozen buildings are exactly alike. The straining after the original and the striking has, of course, resulted in the erection of a few monstrosities, and of some houses more eccentric than pleasing in design, but the general average is exceedingly high.

In this general originality of house design I seem to see a far greater instance of the much-vaunted American liberty and independence, than in any of the political and social institutions of the country.

After we have surveyed the exteriors of the houses and proceed to their interiors, another new fact strikes us, and this is how very much better the different classes of American business men are housed than are their corresponding grades in our own country. Shop-walkers, counter men, and good artisans go home every evening to

houses which in England would not be deemed unworthy of City men of good position. The taste in furnishing and decoration may not always be as good as the houses themselves, but there is nothing corresponding to what may be called our London “genteel villa residence”; and the bank clerk, instead of huddling in one yellow brick box in a long row with a big name, shuts himself up for the evening in his own little detached castle, which contains on a small scale all the accommodation and many more of the conveniences of an English gentleman's house. As we rise higher in the scale we reach the American House Beautiful, as distinguished from the American House Magnificent.

Let us take a random type—the Brookline, or Roxbury, or Dorchester house of a Boston merchant. It will be either a “frame house” of weather-boards, painted white or yellow, or it will be on the fine old Colonial pattern of red brick, with white casemented windows, and a beautiful porch of the type so often seen in English country halls of the Georgian period. In the former case it will be daringly original in shape and feature, full of odd angles and corners and gables; in the latter it will be square and solid, and differing only from its English prototype in the possession of a deep verandah—a necessary institution in hot weather.

We enter a large square hall, furnished and often used as a room, with a large open fireplace, an ample chimney corner, and in the place of the hideous grate, fire-dogs of polished brass or of curiously wrought iron, set in a recess lined with quaint tiles. It is in the furnishing and decoration of their houses that the Americans so astonish the untravelled Briton. Americans travel much, and when they travel they collect, as the British curio and bric-à-brac hunter knows well to his cost, so that we see the dainty porcelain and the curious bronzes of Japan, quaint odds and ends from Italy and Holland, rugs and hangings from Spain and the East, old German ironwork, old English silver and furniture, disposed in the various rooms with such care and taste that our preconceived notions of vulgar ostentation, as associated with the well-to-do American, are shattered at a blow. The owner may be a self-made man, but our national pride is sadly humiliated when we compare the interior of his home with that of some British self-made man we wit of.

Entered from the hall is a beautiful drawing-room, which is sufficient proof that the Woman's Building at the Chicago Fair was no false exemplification of the taste and art of the American woman, so delicate is its decoration, so harmonious its colouring, and, best of all, so homelike and enticing, so absolutely free from the reproach which may be fairly levelled at the average British villa drawing-room—the reproach of looking like a “company” room. A stately dining-room, a billiard-room, and an ample lavatory and cloak-room also lead from the hall—every room, of course, being lighted by electricity, for no gas-lit house would find a tenant in these days.

By the broad and picturesque staircase, with a genuine old English grandfather clock in the angle, we pass to the first floor. Here are the bedrooms, and here are to be noted some of the American domestic features which are immeasurably ahead of ours. The electric system is universal. Just as the American hostess seated at the dinner-table summons the servant by merely pressing a button on the floor with her foot, so can the master of the house light every room on the floors above and below by using one of the half-dozen buttons in the wall of the first landing: a very convenient and efficacious arrangement under such circumstances—extreme ones—as the entrance of burglars into the house. Now why do I say “extreme” circumstances in connection with the entrance of burglars into such a house as I am describing?

Because the undetected entrance of a burglar would be an extreme circumstance, inasmuch as the slightest external interference with any door or window is at once proclaimed through the medium of an ingenious electrical apparatus by the loud ringing of an alarm bell.

“Oh! But you are describing a very superior house!” I hear. Not a bit of it. I have chosen as a type not the residence of a Railway or Pork King, but one of the many hundreds of homes belonging to the well-to-do class of men who work hard for their daily bread and butter.

The bedrooms are spacious, well-lighted, and cheerfully arranged. The ponderous, gloomy furniture of the British bedroom—the great wardrobe, the sarcophagian chest of drawers, the massy washing-stand, and so forth, are absent. Each room has a cupboard as big as many an English dressing-room, and hanging closets. There

are pretty fireplaces with tasteful mantels, for, although every American house is primarily heated by hot air, the English open fireplace is rapidly finding favour on account of its cheerfulness. On each floor of a modern American residence there is at least one bath-room; in many residences each bedroom has its own bath-room. And such bath-rooms! Furnished with all that can make the daily necessity a luxurious indulgence, bright with plated pipes and glistening marble, lavishly supplied with hot and cold water—compared with them our English bath-room is a mere closet, and we think with humiliation upon the proud emphasis with which we advertise a good house as “containing two bath-rooms”! A third salient fact about the American House Beautiful which impresses the British visitor is the thoroughness and completeness of the arrangements from attic to basement.

It is a notorious fact that often in what are deemed very good class English houses there is very good reason for not taking a visitor very far beyond the reception rooms and some of the bedrooms. Proud housewives are naturally reluctant to shock their visitors by an abrupt transition from gorgeously-decorated and upholstered family rooms to dusky kitchens and stuffy attics. The lady of the American House Beautiful shows her basement floor as readily as she shows her drawing-room. And with reason. Servants are more difficult to get and more expensive to keep in America even than in England. Consequently, all that mechanical ingenuity can do to supply the want is done, and an English housekeeper would go into ecstasies over the furnace arrangement which obviates the necessity of fire-laying and fireplace keeping; over the laundry system; over the presses, and cupboards, and closets, and drawers fitted into every available nook and corner, and yet leaving a clear, well-lighted, open kitchen which would be a Paradise to many a British Mary Jane.

When the Frenchman accentuated his criticism of the Chicago Fair with an expression of wonder, not so much at the beauty of all he saw, but that such a beautiful creation should be the work of so eminently prosaic and commercial a people as the American, his feeling was exactly that of an English housekeeper visiting an American House Beautiful. To all appearance the average American lady on her travels cannot be associated with a capacity for household management, for she poses

as a light, frivolous, petted creature with no soul for anything but the "having a good time." Nothing is further from the truth. This very daintiness is the quality which so admirably fits the American woman for the proper tenancy of a House Beautiful. Exquisite taste is more often displayed in the house of an American woman who has never crossed the Atlantic, than in the house managed by an Englishwoman familiar with the marvels of all the capitals of Europe. The art of tasty decoration seems innate in the American feminine soul. The eye is rarely offended by jarring colours, by inharmonious groupings and arrangements, by exaggerations, by ostentatious exhibition of costly belongings, by overloadings or by bare corners, by trumpery make-believes, or by overstudied carelessness. As the French cook can make a good dinner out of an English cook's refuse, so can an American lady do more with a few yards of drapery and lace and a few well-chosen objects of ornament, than many a well-educated, artistically trained Englishwoman with the command of an unstinted purse. Nor does constant contact with uneducated, unpolished bores with no souls above the conversion of one dollar into two, and no information beyond the range of the market, as are the lords of many of these American Houses Beautiful, seem to act prejudicially on the nicety and daintiness of the average American lady.

Moreover, she is as good a domestic manageress as she is a domestic beautifier, and not in the best regulated hotels do things work more smoothly than in most American houses. How it is done is not at first apparent to the visitor—say an English housewife who can only keep her establishment in comparative order by giving her entire mind and time to it, by fussing and fuming from morning till night, by keeping ears and eyes continually strained, by, in fact, making herself the servant of her servants, for the life of an American woman is to all appearances simply a life of self-indulgence, of shop-dawdling, of social intercourse, of pleasure-taking. But that it is done is at once evident to anybody who has been the guest in an American House Beautiful.

AN EVIL EYE.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

"Is that your friend, Jim L'Estrange, Laurie?"

"Well, Madge, why not?"

"Nothing—only—he's not a bit like what I fancied!"

"In what way?"

"You never told me he had such a strange, sad face. I declare I never saw any one look like that!"

"Oh, as to that, he's not the luckiest fellow in the world."

"Not? I thought he was rich and young—had come in for a good fortune——"

"Yes. But hang it all, Madge, money isn't everything."

Madge Lifford raised her delicate, sarcastic eyebrows.

"No! I fancied we fin-de-siècle people had agreed it was! Will you tell me what's wrong with your peculiar-looking friend?"

"Perhaps—some time—but I don't know myself all about him. I've only just picked him up again, as it were, since he came back to England."

"Well, you used to rave about him. We girls always were dying to see your grand hero—you can't wonder we formed an ideal. I pictured a sort of delightful Gay Livingstone—Rhoda Broughton creature, and I see——"

"Well, what? I'm sure he's good-looking enough!"

"Good-looking? Hum—I don't know. He's got a lovely profile, I grant you, like a first-rate bit of sculpture, but that mahogany-coloured complexion——"

"He's been in Africa—Australia——"

"And those curious light-blue eyes, the weirdest eyes! No! You may call him handsome, after a fashion, but not good-looking, Laurie!"

"I call him so," the brother retorted brusquely, as brothers do.

"You're sure he's not a villain?"

"You ridiculous little animal! Old Jim—the most generous, kindest chap in the world! He'd do anything for a pal."

"Well, if I had to describe a villain in a novel I should make him just exactly like your beloved Jim L'Estrange——"

"Hush!" The angry caution came too late. Miss Madge's ringing voice travelled pretty far, and she was not aware that Mr. L'Estrange had approached them to greet his school friend, who was excessively wroth with his sister, for he was certain from the peculiar expression on the other man's face that he had heard her candid comment. Madge got a little red, but she carried it off as usual with a high hand. She and her brother were staying with a

county family, the Brandons, of Elstead Hall, who were entertaining a few friends with a small and early dance. On this occasion Laurence Lifford and Jim L'Estrange had met again after a period of several years. The former greeted his friend with hearty cordiality, which Madge thought he received a little coldly; he had certainly a reserved, hesitating, and unexpansive manner. "This is my sister, Jim; it's a funny thing you never met before."

Mr. L'Estrange bowed profoundly, and with great gravity, though Madge thought she had detected a gleam of amusement in his peculiar light eyes. She was a young person used to conquest, and with an appetite for admiration, and her brothers had never succeeded in snubbing her as they conscientiously tried to do. She was pretty, lively, "ohic"; she had great coolness and frankness of demeanour, could dance and dress to perfection. Naturally the average young man did not hold out against these attractions. But she felt dubious about this young man, who puzzled and piqued her. He did not hurry to engage her for dances; on the whole he seemed more eager to talk to Laurie. She felt aggrieved, and perhaps something in her hazel eyes told him so, for as she met him, he asked her to be good enough to spare him the next waltz.

"But I'm afraid," he added, "I'm not up to modern form—I haven't danced for three years. I've been wandering about in uncivilised places where they only dance corroborees."

"I wish you'd teach me how!"

"I'm afraid it would hardly look as graceful in Mrs. Brandon's drawing-room as in an African clearing. If I make a great mess of waltzing you must forgive me, Miss Lifford—one soon drops out of civilisation."

"Oh, if only one could, it would be such fun!"

He smiled.

"You think so? Well, I don't know; there isn't much fun in savagery, except for a change."

"You don't look as if you found much fun in anything!" Madge said, in her audacious way. She wanted to "get a rise" out of Mr. L'Estrange, but only succeeded in making Laurie scowl. His friend snubbed her by apparently not hearing what she said, as he went on calmly to make some observation on some local event to Lifford. Madge decided that she disliked the man; that she always

did dislike Laurie's particular friends; and, glancing at him disapprovingly, she wondered what on earth made old Laurie choose a chum so utterly unlike himself.

"I wonder now what he is, if not a villain," Madge thought, "for he is something unlike other people. I'm positive of that. Perhaps a spiritualist; a hypnotist; a theosophist; some sort of queer, uncanny new light. I'll pump him. I'm awfully anxious to find out what theosophy is. So far, all I know is something connected with teasups and a most repulsive-looking old woman. If he's that he shall explain it to me; if he hypnotises he shall try his skill on—on some one else. I'm not going to let any one make a fool of me and order me to do ridiculous antics just for the fun of showing off."

Mr. L'Estrange danced lightly, but his step was certainly not quite up to date, and Madge, preferring talk at any time to almost every other amusement, soon contrived to come to an anchor in a quiet nook, where she proceeded to try her hand, with marked ill success, at "pumping" Laurie's chum. Mr. L'Estrange was the most difficult man to get things out of she had ever met, yet she felt sure it was only that the machinery was hard to work, not that the material to be worked was not there. She skilfully led the conversation to modern magic, informed him that a certain doctor there, whom she pointed out, was great at hypnotism—had Mr. L'Estrange any experience of the thing?

"None," he answered carelessly.

"Did you ever try your hand at it? I somehow formed a notion that you would succeed——"

He looked at her rapidly, then turned his eyes away; he was remarkably chary of meeting Miss Madge's expressive and well-practised glances.

"Never. Why should you imagine this? If I had the smallest power of the sort I should be more than careful never to attempt to exercise it."

"But why? They say it is often a most valuable force——"

"H'm—I doubt that. I am sure its danger must be greater than its value."

"Don't you believe that some people have curious powers over others?"

There was a slight but marked pause. When he spoke it was, Madge felt, in a markedly artificial tone, with a little laugh.

"People like you, Miss Lifford, must be quite aware that they have!"

"Oh, you tiresome wretch!" thought Madge, "there's no drawing you anyhow." Aloud she remarked, haughtily disregarding the implied and conventional compliment, that she had seen most curious things in mesmerism, and she really did not see much difference between that and this hypnotizing, which seemed only a new name for the same thing. "Isn't it odd," she went on, "in these most sceptical, agnostic times that there are such strange beliefs and superstitions afloat? These theosophists, now——" she paused a moment; he showed no interest. Apparently he was not one of the occult either. "Do you know anything about them?"

"No, barely anything. I don't pretend to understand such mysteries."

Madge talked on, piqued at discovering so little, touching first one subject, then another, in her airiest and liveliest fashion. He seemed amused, he was very polite, but he showed no real interest till she touched upon Laurie and their friendship of old. Then the thin brown face lit up, and a strange fire came into the weird light eyes.

"Dear old man! I don't know a better sort than Laurie anywhere."

"You will be interested in hearing that he is just engaged."

"No, really? Is he? I am glad! I hope he'll be as happy as he ought to be. Who is it?"

"She's a niece of Mrs. Brandon's—Georgie Brandon, a very nice, jolly, unsophisticated girl. I think Laurie really is lucky."

"He always was. Good old Laurie always fell on his feet."

"You believe in good luck, not in the moral little stories that insist on good conduct?"

"Yes," he said slowly, and in a dull sort of voice, "I believe in good luck." Then he abruptly changed his tone and asked a shoal of questions about Laurie. Madge found herself drawn on to tell him about their jolly life at home, about her four brothers, the noise and fun that went on. "Do you know what a big family is? Have you many at home?"

"No—there are only my mother and myself. But I never am at home."

"You have a nice place somewhere, haven't you?"

"Yes—but I don't stay in it. My mother and a companion live there. I wander about the world."

"But some day you will settle down; you won't be always wandering?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I fear I shall. One doesn't lose the trick."

The next opportunity Madge had of finding her brother alone she began at once about his friend. She declared she didn't like, she even positively disliked him; he was horribly unresponsive and cold, yet he occupied her mind a good deal, simply as a problem, a puzzle. Madge's nimble and alert brain loved puzzles.

"You said you would tell me what you meant by his being unlucky."

"Well, I don't know that I can exactly. I don't remember what it was that always made people think him so, the idea somehow stuck to him. I suppose it began by—it was a horrid thing to happen to a fellow. I don't like to talk about it, but mind you don't mention it to a soul, Madge!"

"I won't. I can be as dark as any one when I choose."

"He was only a kid when it happened, twelve or thirteen; I met him first at that preparatory school, you know, at Esher. The first term he and his twin brother Ralph were both there; they had no father—people used to say there was something queer about the way he died—and this twin, who was half an hour older than Jim, was heir to the property. He was a bad-tempered chap rather, but jolly enough when he wasn't riled, and awfully handsome. Jim was immensely fond of him; and when they quarrelled, as brothers must, Jim always caved in. Well, in the summer holidays they two went out rabbiting, and somehow or other Jim's gun went off—he tripped, I believe, as they were going through a hedge—his gun flew up, and the charge went through Ralph's head——"

Madge uttered an exclamation of horror. Laurie's usually cheerful face was grave enough.

"Ay, it was a frightful thing. They say it nearly killed Jim. He was off his head for a bit, and he didn't come back to school next term. I did hear that his mother never felt the same for him afterwards; she is, I fancy, a queer sort of woman. Ralph was her pet, and she couldn't get over it with poor Jim. That was the first blight on the fellow, but somehow I don't know that it was the last. I've heard rumours—I am not sure of any of them except another

thing that happened at school. We met at Winchester afterwards. A ball from Jim's bat took a fellow on the side of the head, and killed him soon after. It seemed the most accursed luck, he always had it. Yes, I remember another thing; Jim brought scarlet fever back with him from home, and young Brooks died of it. He had it mildly himself, so had I. One night—we slept next each other in the infirmary—I heard him crying and asked him what the row was. After a bit I got it out of him. He was awfully cut up because he was getting better; Brooks was worse. 'He'll die, you'll see he will,' he said, 'and I can't. There's heaps of people to care about Brooks, and none about me, so he'll die and I shan't. That's how things go, and I hate everything!' Poor old Jim! I wasn't out of it when I said he was unlucky, was I! but I hope times will change, or have changed, with him. I've pretty well lost sight of him, so I don't know."

Madge for once was silent, she looked pale and troubled. Lightly as she took life, heartless as she seemed, sometimes there were moods of higher feeling in her, and Laurie's story, coming upon her vivid impression of L'Estrange's curious personality, stirred them. Three lives, three young happy lives destroyed, and he the miserable cause! That little bald narrative of the scene in the infirmary seemed to her almost unbearably sad to think of. She did so hate being obliged to feel sad!

"I can understand your feeling awfully sorry for him, Laurie," she said after a pause, "but what made you fend of him?"

"I believe that began it," he answered simply, "being so sorry for him. Then he was such a generous fellow, he hadn't anything but he wanted to give it away; he spent half his time helping any one over work, and he was so confoundedly obliged to one for sticking to him; yet he wouldn't ever chum up, or be really intimate with one. Brave, too, he was, tremendously brave! He'd stand up to a fellow twice his size and take the foolhardiest risks. Just because he didn't seem to care whether he broke his neck or not, he never did. Oh, I don't know exactly why, but I was always fend of Jim L'Estrange!"

"He makes me feel uncomfortable somehow—ill at ease."

"Because he won't flirt with you," her brother retorted with fraternal brutality.

"As if I wanted him to!" with indignation. "I don't say he mayn't be nice—when you know him."

"Oh, he's not nice. I detest your nice men. Poor old Jim's a thundering good sort. If I were in a hobble, I'd go to him sooner than any one in the world. I shall ask him to be my best man."

"Shall you?"

"Yes, if your ladyship has no objection."

"That wouldn't make much difference. Did you introduce him to Georgie the other night?"

"No, I didn't get the chance, but Mrs. Brandon has asked him to our river picnic to-morrow. He tried to back out of it—that's his way—but I wouldn't let him; he ought not to be a hermit, it only makes him morbid."

The Brandon's house was close to a pretty river for boating, and part of the summer programme included frequent picnics, which were most popular among the light-hearted young folks who laughed, played, and made love through the long sunny days. They were all ready at the boathouse, where the several boats were waiting for their crews, and the difficult question of sorting people was pretty well settled before Mr. L'Estrange made his appearance. Laurie had decided to take Georgie, Madge, and his friend Jim in his boat, and called out to him to make haste as the others were starting. Madge was looking a little intently at the new-comer, who, though got up much like the rest, somehow looked different from them all, and she felt piqued to perceive a visible drawing back.

"Am I to go in that?" he said. "I thought I was to have a canoe."

"No. Jack Brandon begged it. You unsociable beggar, you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself! Come on. Let me introduce you to Miss Georgina Brandon; my sister you know. Be quick! we ought to have started."

Jim L'Estrange bowed in silence. He did not look at either of the girls, but took his place without a word. Madge felt cross; she was not used to finding men thus unwilling to enter her company, yet the very snub stimulated her to effort. Georgie chose to row, and took the stroke oar to Laurie's bow, so Mr. L'Estrange had no choice but to sit beside Madge and listen to her light and airy chat. He listened and smiled, but did not say much, nor did he more than occasionally glance at her. He gave her an impression of avoidance, yet

there was nothing in his manner that was not courteous and considerate, even to deference.

"I believe he's afraid of being more than coldly civil," Madge told herself. The atmosphere of happy lightness, however, had its effect. Jim L'Estrange warmed; he once or twice laughed a low, curious laugh. It seemed to Madge as if something frozen had thawed in his strange, light eyes. He watched Laurie and Georgie with an affectionate sort of interest, remote, yet genuine. When they landed on the spot chosen for dinner, the lovers naturally wandered off, and Madge drew Mr. L'Estrange's notice to them with a smiling glance.

"Good old chap!" he murmured, "he does look happy. I hope he will be the same ten years hence."

"He wants you to be his best man—you know the wedding is to be in September?"

"Me!" He started with a sudden look of alarm, a sudden pallor. "Oh, no, that is quite impossible. I must put him off that."

"Impossible! Why, on earth? What can you mean?"

"Oh—why—nothing—only that I shan't be in England."

"An afterthought—that was not your reason," thought Madge. She said aloud: "Laurie will be much disappointed then; he has set his heart on you."

"It's awfully good of him, but Laurie has troops of friends; he will have no difficulty. It is quite out of the question for me."

"A man likes to have his particular friend—you were always Laurie's hero."

He laughed under his breath.

"What an extraordinary one to choose!" There was a world of concentrated bitterness in both laugh and tone. Madge, perverse Madge, was conscious of a sudden sensation of compassion that almost amounted to kindness. Faulty, perverse she was, but she could not spoil a truly kind and soft heart. She drew a little near to him; she looked at him now, not coquettishly, but with genuine, honest sweetness.

"One doesn't choose, does one, exactly?" she said softly. "One cares for people one knows not why. And Laurie really does care for you."

"Oh, I'm sure of it! I'm sure of it!" he cried emphatically. "My miserable school-life would have been intolerable without Laurie."

"Then, if you are truly such friends,

why should you refuse to be at his wedding?"

"Why?" he repeated in an undertone. "Just for that very reason, to be sure."

"What can you mean?"

She never knew if he would have answered her, for they were at that moment drawn into the crowd. Dinner was ready, and serious conferences had to end. There was one other incident at the meal that drew Madge's attention again. Some gentleman present had been travelling in Greece, and was telling his experiences to Mrs. Brandon. Madge was in the middle of some speech, which she was piqued to find Jim was not attending to. She glanced up at him, and saw that he was intently listening to what the traveller was saying. She listened, too. He was talking about the superstitions of the village; how the peasant mothers disliked hearing their babies praised, and would spit on them or revile them for fear of the evil eye.

"A sort of idea of Nemesis, I suppose. The dread of being too happy and raising the ire of the gods—the old Apollo rage which destroyed Niobe's children. But that evil eye is a queer thing. There was a man in the village who was supposed to have it. He was not a bad man, and not hated. No; they only shunned him. He could not help it, they thought. It was not wickedness, only a curse on him that he brought disaster. Of course I pooh-poohed it; of course I didn't believe it. But an odd thing happened. A mere coincidence, no doubt, but odd. I had bought a young horse, a fine, sound creature, without a blemish, as far as I could see, and I was trying it one day. I went for a good gallop, and got near the village about sunset. As I turned the corner of a winding, rocky path that led to the place, I came upon this man. He was a curious-looking, melancholy fellow, with, I must say, the strangest, wildest eyes. Perhaps a touch of insanity in him, but harmless and mild enough. He was sitting on a stone by the wayside, and got up as I turned. The horse shied at him a bit, and as he came near to pass on, swerved right round and started off. We hadn't gone many paces before he suddenly dropped under me. I got off and looked at him. He was stone dead!"

There was a general exclamation. Madge was looking at Jim L'Estrange, and could not take her eyes away, for something terrified her that she saw there.

"Yes, stone dead!" repeated the gentleman, calmly helping himself to some strawberries. "After that it was useless arguing against the evil eye. The horse had nothing the matter with him; the peasants said he died of that one glance. Of course, it's utter nonsense. One doesn't believe in it, but so it happened."

"Why not believe in it? It's true!"

Jim L'Estrange spoke as if he could not help it; strongly, yet quite calmly. Then, before any one could answer him, he got up and carried the fruit to the other side of the party. Something changed the current of talk, and no more passed on the subject, but Madge could not forget it. She had her clue. She now understood, or thought she understood, what marked Jim L'Estrange from the general run of people.

THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL.

IN THREE PARTS. PART II

FROM LIVERPOOL TO MANCHESTER, BY WATER.

EARLY on the first of January, I left Manchester for Liverpool by train, to make the journey back to Manchester by canal. There were a few hundreds of others bound in like manner for the Prince's Landing Stage—with picnic baskets, wraps, and umbrellas, and abounding good spirits.

We had one brief glimpse of the Manchester Docks as we skirted them. Then the January mist closed about us. There were streaks of promise in the gloomy heavens, however, which put hope in our hearts. Even as it was, though cold, the weather was kind for the first day of the year.

A man may just as well look at his fellow-travellers all the way between these two huge cities of Lancashire as seek graces of landscape outside the train window. To persons like Mr. Ruskin this part of England must be a positive infliction. The "blight" of modern inventions is upon it.

"'Blight' indeed!"—a thoroughbred Lancashire man might well retort. "If money, and trade, and the good things that follow in their wake are a scourge, scourge me with them till I cry 'stop.'"

In Liverpool there was a glint of sunshine.

Down by the Mersey the air cut cold from the water, but the fog was thick.

So, too, was the crowd of adventurous pleasure-seekers. Half-a-dozen steamers, with bunting from their masts and music sounding on their decks, were taking passengers aboard—or rather getting them impelled aboard.

"For goodness' sake don't push behind like that," cried a portly gentleman in the midst of the strife at the "Fairy Queen's" gangway. It was noticeable, however, that even while he spoke, he rammed himself against the person in front of him like an oarsman straining at his oar.

You see, there were to be six hundred of us, and, of course, there was not likely to be sitting room for half six hundred. It was a case of "the foremost get the seats." The voyage was sure to be somewhat lengthy although but forty miles in distance. To stand exclaiming "Oh!" and "ah!" "wonderful!" "a stupendous undertaking!" and the like for five, six, or seven hours on end, was not a prospect steeped in enchantment.

The rest of Liverpool looked on at our departure with much unconcern. We alone were decorated. The big "Teutonic" lay over against us in mid channel, like a dead thing. Even through a glass, no sign of life appeared on her, and this at half-past nine on a fine winter's morning!

But we had compensation in other quarters. The crimson sun stole up from the smoke, and set the imagination at work at the same time that it dulled the sense of cold that came keenly from the river. Tall chimneys showed through the vapour, and there were shadows even of Birkenhead across the water. Fishing ships went by with their lead-coloured sails all set, moving quietly before the east wind. And the Mersey danced beneath the "Fairy Queen's" bulwarks in opaline ripples—blue, purple, fire colour, and green all in a twinkling—and dignified the city round about us and that other city now wedded to the sea by Mersey and bold capitalists combined.

It was a scene that O. W. Wyllie, the famous painter of Thames barges and Thames fog effects, would have taken a professional interest in.

We were a strangely-assorted crowd: gentlemen in bearakin coats who had the air of directors, young ladies in very late fashions and high-heeled shoes, knots of the Liverpool young men about town with jests cascading from their lips, and not a few stout commonplace women with their husbands, who began to eat sandwiches

and refer to bottles the moment our paddles made a stir.

We sang "The Conquering Hero" as a start—at least some of us did. It was a little trying for Liverpool, but that great city did not resent the slight. "The Conquering Hero" recurred frequently. We had it, I believe, at every lock, and now and then we echoed it second-hand, either from the crowd on the banks or the choir on board another steamer. It did as well as anything else, however, and was certainly as appropriate at least as "Auld Lang Syne." There were also "Daisy Bell" and "After the Ball." Two young women with wide mouths, and two lads with fiddles, conspired against us with these touching airs. The occasion was one for reckless generosity. The coppera these itinerant musicians took on board the "Fairy Queen" ought to have kept them all in clover for a week.

Meanwhile, we are rapidly going up stream. The training-ships are passed. So, too, are the powder magazines, fast moored in the river. Bunches of holly or mistletoe decorate the tops of the masts of these vessels. The growing freshness of the air, as we get away from the shelter of Liverpool's crowded wharves and masses of building, also tells of the season.

And so to Eastham in quick time. A fringe of trees on the banks hints at the vernal and midsummer graces of the water-side resort. So does a cottage with large letters on its wall telling of teas and hot water. The fog has mainly lifted. The bright red of the bricks of the Canal buildings is cheerful to see—much more so, indeed, than the puddly ripple of Mersey's smutty water against the banks beneath the tea-garden cottage. The unpleasant water has dyed the banks black to the high tide mark. One would almost scruple to drown the most delinquent of dogs in such a fluid.

Nothing could have been simpler than our entrance into and exit from the Eastham lock. We were hailed by the lock master, who asked our name and the nature of our cargo—though his eyes might have enlightened him on both points—and then the massy gates of tropic greenheart wood were closed betwixt us and the tidal river. Officials in brand new uniform and two or three score sight-seers—mostly little children from the neighbouring village—looked down upon us in the depths of the lock. But we were soon above them, and then with

a cheer we departed from Eastham. The wind blew strong across the river and made red noses the rule with us. There was, however, jollity enough.

As touching this, a meditative gentleman with bleared eyes observed to me:

"There's no county in England where the people have such high spirits as in Lancashire. I don't care where you go, you'll never find them the same as at Liverpool. It's fun all the day long, that's what it is. It does a body good to see 'em."

My friend referred especially to the waggish doings of a certain person, who had just packed up the fag ends of his breakfast in the cover of the penny weekly with the appropriate title of "Tit-bits," and pinned the small parcel, with the printed title outside, to the coat-tail of a drowsy and rather fat man, who suspected nothing less than that he was being made the butt of a score or two of his fellow-countrymen. This deplorable dupe went to and fro about the boat for an hour, heedless of the grins that greeted his back. At length he sat down, and crushed the broken victuals asunder from him.

I dare say Lancashire is a more witty part of the realm than it has credit for being. Still, this particular sample of humour did not seem to strike a top note.

For a mile or two we had nothing to admire in the Canal, save the expensive embankment on the Mersey side. For most of the distance to Runcorn, in fact, this embankment has had to be continued. It is composed of enormous masses of sandstone and granite. The embankment cuts off the view of the Lancashire shore of the Mersey. But the deprivation is a bearable one.

At Ellesmere Port there is a dry dock, and a ship was being repaired in it. There was a suspicion of make-believe about this piece of work. It looked as if the vessel had been mounted, and the men set hammering at its hull, more for the sake of the trippers on this, the opening day, than because she was really in need of repair. But, of course, it was not so. The Canal Company means to earn a dividend just as soon as it can.

Ellesmere Port is noteworthy, apart from its docks, as being the outlet into the Ship Canal of the Shropshire Union Canal; which traverses Cheshire, Shropshire, and Staffordshire, with connections into Worcestershire and the south. This promises to be an important place on the Canal.

More embankments, the crossing of a couple of small rivers and a few miles of country of no particular interest, and Saltport is reached. We are here at the mouth of the river Weaver—a considerable stream.

The name Saltport speaks for itself. The various "wiches" of Cheshire send their white cargoes hither for shipment. The Weaver was a useful thoroughfare of trade before the Ship Canal crossed it and offered it the hand of alliance. Here are the ten Weaver sluices in connection with the Canal, adapted to let loose fifty thousand cubic feet of water per second.

From Saltport on to Runcorn we are in the midst of business. The Weston and Runcorn Canal runs parallel with the Ship Canal, and the famous Bridgewater Canal—now the Ship Canal's property—lowers itself by a series of locks to connect with the other two canals. One dock succeeds another. Steamers and sailing vessels are taking or unloading cargo. Everywhere flags are to be seen, and crowds of inquisitive folks stare at us as we pass them by.

Runcorn the dismal is at hand. Its gigantic railway bridge here crosses the Mersey to Widnes on the north side. Tall chimneys volley smoke towards the clouded heavens alike here and at Widnes. The river looks less and less attractive; for the tide is out, and the miles of black sand sparkling with greasy stains, and with the murky stream flowing between these ugly banks, do not make up a picture of delight.

However, every yard shows us more of man's triumph over Nature. The great railway bridge alone is a fillip to human pride. A train hurtles over it as we flatter our flags beneath it. The passengers wave their handkerchiefs to us. Runcorn's population also for the moment forget their far from Arcadian modes of life, and salute us from the sandstone banks, up which the red houses of the town climb to the level of the high bridge. The air reeks with chemicals.

From the first of the swing-bridges, just east of the other bridge here, we are hailed with a distant cheer, and the people are hustled off it by the custodians, and its five hundred and seven tons of iron turn calmly on their axles to let our masts pass, with nothing betwixt them and the faded blue of the heavens.

Hence to Manchester we are never without spectators of our passage, and their numbers increase as we cover the miles.

The run from Runcorn to Latchford is a nearly straight one of about ten miles, with no lock intervening. In fact, from Eastham to Latchford—twenty-one miles—there is no lock. But there are in all four swing-bridges, which we have to warn of our coming with eerie shrieks and whistles.

Now, however, we are getting fast on the trail of other steamers. There are also boats in our rear. It seems likely that we shall be badly delayed at Latchford. Among the steamers the "Albatross," of the General Steam Navigation Company, looms large. This is the trial trip of that company too; the captain of the "Albatross" seems none too sure that the Canal is large enough for his boat. But he is disabused when he finds himself thrust into the lock at Latchford with two or three other boats nearly as big as his own, and hoisted as if he were a feather weight.

The cutting from Runcorn to Latchford is not suggestive of difficulty. The banks are, in places, at a sharp incline, and in places perpendicular. Wattles have been used extensively to bind the artificial banks into solidity. The sandstone is ochre-coloured and a warm red. Here and there, of course, one sees more of the careful brickwork embedded into the natural banks, which, as much as anything, tells of the solicitude with which engineers and contractors have worked together. All the bricks used in the Canal are of a bluish tint. In all, some twenty million have been required to make up one hundred and seventy-five thousand cubic yards of brickwork.

There is not much population on this reach—holiday spectators apart. The north bank is still wholly in the hands of the contractors. Little locomotives are to be seen gliding up and down, with their chains of loaded trucks after them. Steam navvies lift their repulsive bulk here and there. Short rows of residential sheds tell, moreover, of the two-legged navvies who have been here camped by their work—with their wives and families, and domestic cats and fowls—for the last two or three years at least. The women folk from these frail temporary abodes—of which even a vagabond American would not hold a lofty opinion—flutter their shawls at us, and their children shout to us. Their husbands, too, desert for a moment from their spade work to give us a flourish of the arm.

Nearing Latchford we leave on the left—though hidden from us in our sandstone cutting—the extensive works which are to make Warrington a shipbuilding depot. Already the various lines of railway about us have become confusing. Trains are seen on both sides of the Canal, two or three running parallel with each other, and crossing the Canal on the great High-level bridge by Latchford, and also behind us toward Warrington.

These workings give rise to significant conversation among the experienced ones on board the "Fairy Queen." What duels, to be sure, had to be fought over this ground between the Canal Company, seeking its right of way, and the different railway companies which, inimical to the Canal from the very start, were likely to oppose, tooth and nail, its pretensions to disturb the existing condition of their lines! But they saw things otherwise in Parliament, and the railway directors have had to submit to their lines being altered and bridges built for them. They had some set-off in the claims for compensation that they were allowed to make. And, according to many experts, they used this opportunity of bleeding their enemy to the utmost.

Thousands and tens of thousands of people watch our progress into the Latchford locks. The crowd are perilously near the walls of the Canal. To us it seems that very little pressure from behind will urge them into the water by hundreds at a time. But nothing happens. Nothing, that is, except a fusillade of jokes and congratulations; a bit of a bump as either our helmsman or our neighbour's goes momentarily wrong; and our helpless exposure to a score of cameras as we lend life and, I hope, dignity to the picturesque scene in the lock.

Some one is hurt, however. The ambulance engine speeds to the front and men dash at a stretcher. We see the victim being supported betwixt two men as we glide quietly away towards the next lock. It would be odd if such a day were lived through without a few accidents.

Irlam is the next lock—seven and a half miles more towards Manchester. The characteristic feature of this stage is our ultimate association with the Mersey, much diminished in width after Runcorn is passed. We cross it, and for a mile or two absorb it, and then let it meander away finally to the south just ere we reach Irlam.

Mersey is not a pretty stream, and Irlam, which mates with it by Irlam, is still less pleasing to look upon. How should they be otherwise, with so much of the sewage of Manchester and other towns entering them unabashedly! For dead dogs, and other such undesirable flotsam and jetsam, they must take almost premier rank in the land. Their colour, too, is profoundly against them. Near Manchester poor Irlam is constrained into a cascade. Nothing could be more humiliating to the unsavoury stream than the contrast of its dirty bubbles and unwholesome-looking fringe of leaden spume with the glorious snow-white of a Norwegian cataract.

Between Latchford and Irlam comes Partington. This is destined to be a useful spot. Its coal basin may prove as profitable as any other of the Canal's sources of revenue. The Wigan coalfield will now naturally connect with the Canal, which is only a few miles distant. There is also the Haydock field, which is reputed to have an upper crust of four hundred and fifty-two million tons of coal, and which is to be joined to the Ship Canal by a railway. Hitherto much of this Lancashire coal has gone to Garston on the Mersey—nearly opposite Eastham—at a cost of one shilling and ninepence per ton. It will cost but ninepence to be tipped on board steamers at Partington.

From Irlam to Barton locks the distance is only two miles. But we made it very slowly. The banks on both sides of the Canal were lined with people. The smoke of Manchester was already in the air, and Manchester's enthusiasm too. We were now well in procession. Welsh boats laden with slate and granite, and the most frightful steam-whistles imaginable, and other cargo-boats sandwiched us. Noise ran riot. Steamer after steamer joined in the diabolical concert of steam-whistling, and the people clamoured their approval of these ear-cracking ecstasies of civilisation.

The tumult almost made me oblivious of one of the most astounding achievements in the Ship Canal's works. Here at Barton the Bridgewater Canal crosses its greater ally by a swing-bridge. This means that every time a tall-masted steamer goes up or down the Ship Canal, a section of the Bridgewater Canal, two hundred and thirty-five feet long, six feet deep, and nineteen feet wide, is insulated—if a land term can be applied to water—and turned on a pivot. The weight of the

bridge and its water is one thousand four hundred tons. Ships of light draught may thus be seen sailing over the Ship Canal, with other ships beneath them.

This aqueduct has been substituted for the famous Brindley's bridge, which here carried the Bridgewater Canal over the Irwell some forty feet above the latter stream.

Mode Wheel Locks served us as the ante-chamber to the great docks of Manchester.

Until this day I had failed to grasp the idea of Manchester's magnitude, audacity, and populousness. It seemed as if the inhabitants of a metropolis were on the banks here alone, and especially by the docks with their imposing length of border.

More cheers and steam-whistling, and we were landed, after a voyage of about six hours.

At one of the side docks, reckless of the gala air of the bunting on all the sheds and all the ships, a steamer was discharging refined sugar. I could see no other cargo discharged or being laden. The sheds were still dense with the chairs that had earlier in the day seated the forty or fifty thousand shareholders and others, with their wives and relations. Ere long the world will be laid under tribute to fill these warehouses with the produce of every kind that Manchester craves, and is determined to have direct.

I shook hands with a casual acquaintance on the "Fairy Queen," whose destination was other than mine. He said he would not for anything have missed seeing what we had this day seen, and as we had seen it. That struck me as rather a large saying. But I quite agreed with him as valuing the impression this voyage had made upon the mind.

MISS GARTH.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

It was observed by all that when Dalgarno came down to breakfast the next morning, he was in a very different frame of mind from his last night's mood. Whatever spell Jocelyn Garth had used, she had used it successfully. Dalgarno was deferential to herself, and entirely irreproachable in his manners to everybody else. He treated Lady Carstairs with an almost slavish humility, which, as the latter never cast so much as an eyelash in his direction, was so much humility lost.

"By the way, what became of Aveline last night?" asked Lady Carstairs, languidly eating game pie. "She did not come to the drawing-room as usual."

A flash of trouble stirred Jocelyn's eyes, as a flash of lightning might disturb the serenity of some still lake. But it passed so quickly that only Godfrey Wharton observed it.

"She was not very well. She had a headache," she answered briefly.

Lady Carstairs said no more, and the subject dropped. But Dalgarno, who had been listening attentively, pricked up his ears.

"Who is 'Aveline'?" he asked Rose Carstairs, who was sitting next him.

"Aveline Harberton," replied the young lady succinctly.

"Is she staying here?" asked Dalgarno impatiently.

"She lives here."

Rose Carstairs spoke to Dalgarno only when she was obliged, and then as shortly as possible. But when Dalgarno was bent on questioning he generally elicited answers.

"Is she Miss Garth's companion, then?"

"Miss Garth has no companion. Aveline is a child. Since her mother's death she has lived here always."

Dalgarno asked no more questions, but he had apparently found something to meditate about. He scrutinised Jocelyn's face every now and then with a puzzled look.

After breakfast most of the party hunted up their skates. The air was gloriously keen and clear—an air to make one drunk with exhilaration, as though with strong wine. A sharp frost had held an iron away for weeks on the home ponds. There was much chatting, and laughing, and clinking of polished steel blades as the party made ready to start.

They were all going—every one of them, except Jocelyn herself and Lady Carstairs. Dalgarno, in an overcoat with a showy imitation sealskin collar, was swinging a pair of skates in his hand which he had borrowed from Godfrey Wharton, who happened to possess two pairs. He thought he might as well begin to enjoy himself as soon as possible. The little business with Jocelyn could wait. He was well pleased with his present quarters, and was in no hurry.

He had not skated for years. The ring of the metal on the clear black ice was as the trumpet of a war-horse to him. He was good at most physical exercises; he

had been debarred from the enjoyment of them for long. He made the most of every flying moment.

Jocelyn escaped to her boudoir the moment the chattering, merry, glad-hearted party had set off. She was perfectly aware that Lady Carstairs was only waiting to pounce upon her for an explanation of her own extraordinary leniency of the night before. She was only safe in her boudoir. That was forbidden ground to every one.

Once alone, Jocelyn threw herself down on a low couch with a moan of almost unbearable anguish. She had dreaded this moment for long years. It had come at last. The Iron Hand which crushes us all alike, which has no pity for the weak, no throb of divine compassion for the happy, had struck her down also. As she lay there death seemed infinitely preferable to the life that lay before her.

She sat up at last, her face ghastly in its pallor, her hands pressed to her aching head. She looked dully round at the exquisite room where she had collected all rare and beautiful things—a room absolutely unique in its priceless hangings, and wonderful china, and delicate exotic flowers. This room, like herself, had found a master.

A low tap at the door alarmed her, and set her heart beating fast. Who dared to disturb her here, in the solitude which she never allowed to be invaded? Could it be——? Her heart gave a sick throb.

"Come in," she said faintly.

She had expected to see the evil eyes and coarse, handsome face of her strange guest, but instead she met the firm blue eyes of Godfrey Wharton.

"May I come in?" he asked diffidently.

He had never been in that room before. It seemed to him almost like invading a shrine. Everything in it was a reflection of the mind that had planned it. Its delicacy, richness, purity, were all—Jocelyn Garth.

She bade him enter with a faint smile.

"I thought you had gone skating?" she said.

"I started—but I came back. You look so ill!" he added deprecatingly.

"It is only a headache," she answered; "you must not spoil your morning for me."

He hesitated.

"Of course there is no need to tell you that a morning with you means heaven for me," he answered, with a short laugh. "But I own I did not come back for that

alone. Dalgarno is cutting quite a dash on the ice," he added, in a different tone.

"I should have thought he would have been cutting figures instead," said Jocelyn, with an attempt at lightness.

He took no notice of it.

"I came back to see if I could help you," he said abruptly. "You cannot expect me to bear a repetition of last night's disgraceful scene! No man with blood in his veins could stand that a second time."

She turned a little paler.

"I do not think that it will occur again," she said in a low voice.

"How can you tell? How can you possibly guarantee even decent conduct from a drunken brute like that! He may insult you when I am not there—when there is no one near to defend you."

"You saw that I could manage him last night."

"Yes, but at what a frightful sacrifice! Do you want to go through such another scene again?"

"No."

"Then let me kick the brute out of the house! He is making you wretched, even ill. Give me authority to——"

"No. He must stay."

"Why, in Heaven's name?"

"Because there would be a worse scandal if he went than if he stays," she answered steadfastly.

He looked at her sharply. His eyes took in every detail of the weary face and drooping figure. A great love surged up within his heart, a longing wish to serve and cherish her; to bear her burdens for her; have her for his own, now and always.

"Jocelyn," he said steadily, "you know quite well that I love you. I have loved you for years, and you have kept me at a distance for years, why, Heaven only knows. Jocelyn! give me the right to guard and protect you, dearest."

He bent down, and taking her hand, pressed it to his lips. She tore it from him with a violent shudder.

"You must not! You must not!" she gasped. "Oh, I have tried to prevent this—you know how hard I have tried."

"Why?" He had let his hand fall to his side, and stood leaning against the mantelpiece, looking at her. "Why?"

"I cannot tell you," she answered, hiding her face in her hands.

"I will have a reason. I insist upon it. It is my due. A woman does not throw over the man she loves for a mere whim."

"The man she loves!"

"Yes; you love me," he answered firmly.

She looked up at him with horrified, dilated eyes.

"And you ask me to give you the right to defend me against him?" she said, with a laugh that made him shudder.

"I do. Why should I not?"

"Because you, of all men, have the least right to do so."

"Why?" he repeated unmovedly, not taking his eye from the wild, white face before him.

She stood up suddenly, swaying a little, and leaning one hand on the back of the sofa for support.

"Because," she answered slowly, her gaze on the ground, her whole figure trembling with emotion, "because it is not my lover who must defend me against my husband."

Godfrey Wharton uttered a little inarticulate cry, and shifted his position slightly. The silence that followed was so intense that it seemed filled with vague, unearthly sounds.

At last he spoke.

"Your husband! That man! Am I dreaming, Jocelyn, or are you telling me the living truth?"

"It is true," she answered in a flat, lifeless voice.

He moved towards her.

"Sit down, Jocelyn," he said gently, "and try and tell me all about it. Perhaps I can help you even now."

She shook her head, but she obeyed him. He sat down on the sofa by her side and took her hand, speaking to her as he might speak to a child.

"Try and tell me all about it, dear. The burden is too heavy for you to bear alone."

Not a word of his own cruel disappointment; of the hopes cherished for years killed in one moment; of the fair dream-castle he had built, now reduced to the greyest of ashes. His only thought was for her.

Jocelyn began her story. She told it haltingly, but the kind hand that held hers seemed to give her strength and courage.

"I met him abroad first. He was a friend of Robert's. He is an Italian I believe, though I only know what he has chosen to tell me himself. I think Robert had some reason for wanting me to marry him—but I do not know. He fell in love

with me—and—and followed me to England. Robert stopped abroad, but he wrote to me and said that Dalgarno was a good fellow, and he hoped we should be married. I was just eighteen then."

"The scoundrel!" muttered Godfrey between his teeth.

"Well—we were married," she went on, in the same hopeless tones, taking no notice of his interruption, "we were married privately one morning, and no one ever knew anything about it."

She paused.

"I was not rich then. Uncle Anthony was still alive, and it was very uncertain as to whether he would leave his money either to Robert or me. He had many other relations, and we were very poor. At any rate there would have been no chance for me if he had known of my marriage. So Dalgarno persuaded me to keep it a secret."

She paused. Godfrey mutely noticed that she never called her husband by his christian-name. He felt an insanely overpowering curiosity to know what it was—what was the name that she had called him by in the days when she was Dalgarno's bride.

She went on.

"I was a governess then, teaching in a school in Harwich. I had to earn my own living, and there was no one to look after me. I went on teaching after we were married. We were in lodgings there for some time."

Her face flushed at the remembrance of those days, and he pressed her hand in silent sympathy. He dared not ask her if she had ever loved her husband. It was agony and shame to think that any other man had called her wife except himself.

"Dalgarno was never unkind to me, but he was away a good deal and I was left very much alone. One night, when we had been married about a year, he came home in a great state of excitement, and told me that he was being pursued—that there was a warrant out against him—that I must help him to disguise himself and escape. I did help him, and he got away. But only to be caught and brought back."

She covered her face with her hands with a shudder.

"Go on," said Godfrey, steadily. He must know all if he was to help her.

"He was caught. It was for forgery. He has been in prison for seven years."

So this man, this convicted felon, with the coarse sin-hardened face and seamed and scarred fingers, was the husband of the beautiful, gracious, refined woman before him, whom he had hoped one day to call his wife. Oh the pity of it!

She went on, still without tears.

"Soon after he—disappeared, Uncle Anthony died. He left me his whole fortune, because he said I was probably the only one of his relations who did not expect it. Then I came here and have lived here ever since."

"How did you know—he was out?"

"I did not know. He is out before his time. He behaved so well in prison!" she answered with a faint laugh. "But when he walked in yesterday—it seems centuries ago already—I did not even feel surprised. I knew that it would come some day. The sword has been hanging over my head for years. It has fallen at last."

He took her hand again.

"Poor child! Poor deceived child!" he murmured tenderly, "I can no longer be your lover, dear, but I am your friend always. We will fight this man together."

"He is difficult to fight," she answered dully, staring straight before her.

"The law cannot compel you to live with him."

She drew her head up proudly.

"I would rather die than live with him again—as his wife. But how can I prevent his presence here? I cannot turn my own husband out of doors."

"It must be done, nevertheless. You can give him money."

"I have offered it him, but he will not take it."

He smiled a little.

"In these enlightened days, Jocelyn, no woman is compelled to live beneath the same roof with a man whom she dislikes, even though he is her husband."

"No—I know," she answered, frowning a little.

"Well then, give him the money and let him go. It will have to come out I suppose about—I don't know why it should though. You could make it worth his while to keep quiet."

"He pretends to love me still!" She shuddered again. "I do not want to do anything yet—have a scandal before all these people. I want to get the house-party quietly over before I do anything."

"I understand."

Godfrey had kept his own love and jealousy well in the background until now. He was but human, and it burst forth.

"I cannot bear to think that such a man has called you wife! Oh, it is a bitter blow, Jocelyn. I would give my life to undo the past."

"The past can never be undone," she answered sombrely. "Don't you remember Dumas' words: '*Le passé est la seule chose pour laquelle Dieu est sans pouvoir.*' We can never escape the rash consequences of our own mad acts."

Godfrey looked at her—refined, "spirituelle," fair as a lily. By what strange charm had Dalgarno won her?

As he looked at her, she spoke again: this time her face was turned away, and her voice was only a hoarse whisper.

"He—he has a stronger hold still over me, only he does not know it! Godfrey, I have not told you all!"

"What is it?" asked Godfrey Wharton in terrified tones, an icy fear clutching at his very heart.

"When—my husband was in prison," said Jocelyn, "I—oh, Godfrey, cannot you guess?"

She turned her lovely, flushed face to his.

"Aveline——" she murmured, her eyes full of a divine mother-love that swallowed up all lesser feelings of regret and shame, "Aveline——"

"She is your child—and his!" murmured Godfrey Wharton, stumbling to his feet with wild eyes full of a despairing dread. "Oh, this is more than I can bear!"

A dull flush of jealousy and anger—the jealousy and anger that urge men on to kill—surged in his cheeks and made his heart beat thickly. Then it faded and left him deathly white.

He staggered from the room without another word. It was not a time for speech. Words would have choked him.

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MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacott," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IX. UNCONVENTIONAL.

THE Bethunes had come to London, and the fact was chronicled by the society papers, because they were of the bluest blood and because they were related to all the best families in the kingdom, which families formed the magic circle of the best society. Mr. Bethune was a man who had a hobby. He collected ancient clocks and watches and first editions. He hated politics and did not care much about society; but he was a Conservative and did much as his fathers had done before him. He, however, allowed his children to do as they liked; if his family allowed him to collect his watches and his first editions, they might go their own way. He was very kind, very amiable, and the only fault his friends found with him was that he spent his energy on useless matters, and above all that he never found fault with his eldest son's extraordinary fads.

"They are all born with fads," Lady Colmer had said, "and that in itself is a misfortune. Mrs. Bethune never would take her title. She was Lady Anne by rights, her father being Lord Rookwood, but she said the name of Bethune was enough honour for her. She dresses very badly and never can remember the peerage," both which offences are not easily forgiven by a certain set of people.

"The whole family are ridiculously affectionate," replied Sir Harry Colmer, who did not suffer from demonstrative children, "and the girls are really too strange."

The truth was that the girls were quiet English ladies who did not flirt. Adela Bethune was a small, dark-eyed girl with a bewitching smile and a kind word for everybody. She liked "slumming" and she liked society. She was a universal favourite except with the fast set, who thought her behind the times. Her sister Mary was a musical genius, and could be found playing in all sorts of strange places, but outside the realm of music, Mary Bethune was quite a useless member of society. Dora, the youngest, was the useful one in the household. She remembered dates, she always knew who was invited to dinner, and what invitations had been accepted or declined. She was not out yet; but the family failing of forgetfulness and general oddness was kept in check by Dora, who was universal referee.

She idolised her brother and thought all his ideas were right. This caused her to advocate many contradictory actions which, however, did not seem strange to her because Forster thought them right. In many of his ideas Forster had but one follower and one disciple, but he could always count on this one. Usually he could count upon two, for Philip Gillbanks did not often disagree with him.

The Bethunes sometimes came to London for the season, and were very often to be found in town at other times, looking after their several hobbies. The world forgave their odd ways simply because they were Bethunes. Lady Colmer said she did not like people who differed so much from the rest of the world as did the Bethunes; still, there was a certain excitement to be derived from such unconventional people, and the world enjoyed the excitement and was grateful for it.

It was eight o'clock in the morning, a

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time when that section of the London world which comes for the season is usually in bed. But the Bethune breakfast-table was already spread, and the various members of the household came down at short intervals of time.

Mr. Bethune read family prayers at a quarter past eight punctually. He read them whether the household were gathered together or not, but unless Dora was down first to find the places in the prayer-book and in the large Bible, Mr. Bethune wandered hopelessly, both as to the date of the day and as to the chapter that should be read.

Forster was earlier than the rest of the family, but usually came in about prayer-time or soon after, and shared in the universal greeting which then took place.

Mr. Bethune received two kisses from each of his children, but on various parts of his head and face. He did not seem to take much heed of these tokens of affection, but if the morning salutation were left out, some time before the end of the day he was sure to mention the fact, and to express surprise.

Mrs. Bethune was a plump, kindly-faced lady. She was very good-natured about going to meetings for the benefit of various societies, and her house was the rendezvous of the many charitable ladies who got hold of her. Happily there was a large room in Curzon Square which was not often used by the family, and here might often be found committees and councils sitting to deliberate upon every imaginable good work.

Some of them were in opposition to each other; Mrs. Bethune never found it out, but thought it so kind of all these nice people to devote their lives to such useful objects. When possible she sat on the committees and voted for everything, usually on both sides of the question. If the earnest workers did not find her support very helpful, at least they were grateful for her room and her five o'clock tea, and called her "Dear Mrs. Bethune," at short intervals, to her face, and "Poor dear Mrs. Bethune" behind her back.

The Bethunes went a great deal into society, because Mrs. Bethune could not bear refusing any one who was so kind as to ask her, but it was not always possible to make sure of her presence. Parties overlapped each other, and she never could be quite certain about dates and hours. Mary was only able to accompany her if there was good music to be heard,

and Adela if she were not engaged in helping her friends with their various philanthropic hobbies. The family all looked forward to the time when Dora should come out, as she had at present no hobby, and possessed the only good memory to be found in the house.

Forster was looking round for a profession, his mother said. He had been abroad with Philip Gillbanks, and it was certainly better not to be in a hurry, especially as the dear boy was so full of plans. Forster was his mother's darling, but she as little understood his ideas as those of the many committees on which she sat. She hoped he would marry a nice, quiet girl who would make him happy, but she was a little nervous on that point, because Forster did like such very odd people. With all her universal kindness, Mrs. Bethune had a certain well-defined class feeling, for though she would not have hurt a fly or the feelings of a Hottentot, she had a conviction that every one who was not of the same social standing as herself must need a great deal of sympathy. "Poor dear people" she called them, adding, "so very nice, aren't they?" in a tone of apology. Forster's strange friends were mostly "poor dear people," and so were several of Adela's protégés. But she drew a line at the idea of her children marrying beneath the right social standard. She did not care about money, but she was glad her own fortune was tied up so that Forster could not insist on sharing it with the fish-market people he was so fond of visiting. She would say openly that he must have a wife of social standing equal to his own.

Though possessing no title, Mr. Bethune was prouder of his family name than of any title the Queen could bestow. It was said he had refused a baronetcy, and the saying was true.

"One reason of my refusal," he said one day to a Cabinet Minister, "is that even if I accepted a title—an expensive present to receive—my son would not take it up. He thinks titles wrong. That is one of his ideas; Forster has a good many ideas, and I think one's children ought to be allowed a free choice."

As every one knew that Mr. Bethune had refused worldly honours he was admired for it. It was certainly a sign of unusual pride. The Bethunes were more sought after than ever, and poor Mrs. Bethune became still more uncertain as to her engagement list.

This morning the May sunshine was perfect, and the heat was of that pleasant kind which makes London an ideal place for a few weeks in the spring. As usual the Bethune family dropped in at varying intervals before prayers, except Dora, who was late, and who came in to find her father reading the wrong Psalms. Her French governess in the meanwhile could not, as usual, find her way about the English prayer-book, so she was diligently turning over the leaves.

"Papa, it's the fifth to-day," said Dora in a stage whisper, as Mr. Bethune appealed to her.

"Is it, dear? Ah, yes! We had better begin again."

After prayers Forster entered, and Dora immediately ran to her brother, pouring out a volley of questions as the two went to kiss their father, who murmured:

"Oh, Forster, it's you, my boy. Where have you been this morning?"

"I had business at the fish-market, and on my way home I called on Philip Gillbanks."

"Rather an early call, wasn't it?" said his mother.

"The family have come to town for the season, and Philip is going to devote himself to his sister. Adela, can you take mother to call upon Mrs. Gillbanks, and show them every attention possible?"

"Yes, dear, of course. Fancy coming to town now when you need not do it," said Adela, and her sweet, bright face made the London room look brighter.

"What is poor dear Mrs. Gillbanks like, Forster?" said his mother. "And, oh! dear Dora, come and sort these invitation cards and see how many parties we can manage to-day."

"Mademoiselle, will you help me? It will teach you the titles of the English better than you can learn them from your French novels," said Dora. Mrs. Bethune had given Dora the choice of applicants for the post of governess, thinking that this was a sufficient guarantee before making her one of the family, because, "Dear Dora always knows nice people at first sight."

"Mrs. Gillbanks is like any other lady, I suppose," said Forster absently, "but I did not see his sister. I believe she is very handsome. Philip is going to undertake some work for me. Those fish-market lads want a good day in the country, and we are going to manage it somehow."

"Oh, Forster! You'll let me come too?" said Dora.

"Yes, if you like; but perhaps ladies will be in the way."

"Do not they smell a little of the fishes?" asked Mademoiselle sadly; "if so, Dora could not go to the play in the evening."

"Forster, you will come with me, won't you, instead of going to that ball with Adela?" urged the girl.

"Ball, is there a ball—and where?"

"Forster! you promised mother a week ago that you would go to the Rookwoods," said Adela, laughing. "Don't you know she wants you to meet a nice young person to marry, and our dear cousin always has one ready."

"Oh, yes, of course! Mother, have you at last found the young person I am to marry?" said Forster, laughing.

"No, dear, not yet. I looked out for her the other day, but there was no one handsome enough except Miss Millwell, and, poor dear, she is not quite the right wife for you."

"Why not? Hasn't she all her faculties?"

"Oh, yes, poor dear, so handsome and so well off, and I'm sure she is very nice."

"Well, what's the matter with her?"

"Poor dear, you know her father made his money, I forget how."

"Is that all? There's Philip's father, he makes his money in screws, and Philip's no worse for that."

"I don't say anything against your friends, Forster dear; we were talking of your wife."

"I'm sure Miss Millwell wants a title, so you need not fear. I shouldn't be good enough for her," and Forster's eye twinkled with delight.

"Forster! Why, the Bethunes——"

"Catlike lifters, I think, if you go far back enough."

"You know, mother, it's no use trying to make Forster believe the Bethunes are better than any one else," said Adela. "I have tried but I never can succeed."

"Because they are no better and no worse."

"Such a dangerous belief, dear. I'm sure any Princess would be glad to marry you!"

There was a chorus of delight at this.

"Where is one to find a Princess, pray? They are all booked as soon as born, and usually they are badly brought up," said Forster.

"And what a life the Princess would have!" answered Adela. "Forster would

expect her to go to a fish-market at six a.m. He had better fall in love with a flower-girl; they are accustomed to early hours."

"Adela dear, even in fun I can't bear to hear such things said! Of course flower-girls are really very nice, poor dears, but a Princess is more suitable for your brother. Papa dear, are you coming to Lady Romanes's? She has an 'At Home.' Dora says it's to-day."

"But there is a fête at Kerwick House too, mother, and a dinner-party before the Rookwoods' ball! I don't mean ever to come out. Poor Adela! but it is Mary's turn to-day."

Mary hardly ever spoke, even in the bosom of her family, and no one thought it strange. "She was thinking of her music," they said. Now she took out a pocket-book and searched for a date.

"I can't go to-day. I must practise with Mr. Moortown's choir. I take first violin; they can't do without me."

"Well, then, Adela, you must go," said Dora. "I thought I had arranged everything yesterday, but Mary's engagement has put it all out."

"I'm very sorry, Dora," said Mary gravely.

"Nobody knows or cares if we are there or not," said Forster. "I suppose I must go to the ball with mother and Adela. I don't dance, but I think Philip said he was going there with his sister—I got him an invitation—and we can talk over things."

"Does not Mr. Gillbanks dance?"

"I don't know; not if he wants to talk," said Forster; and Dora exclaimed:

"Well, I do hope you will make haste and marry a worldly woman, Forster dear, because then she could do all the arranging for the Bethune family. You really must. Mother, have all the acceptances come for the dinner-party next week?"

"Yes, dear, I forgot. Well, perhaps this note refers to it. The Dacres have lost an uncle and regret—that was that for the dinner! Just look, dear."

Dora ran to the engagement book between two bites at a French roll.

"Tiresome people! Yes. Now it's so near, what is to be done?"

"Ask the Gillbanks," said Forster. "Philip and his sister. The mother never goes anywhere. That will do, but you must say that they must forgive a short notice, mother."

"Poor dears, yes. But Lord Montjoy is coming. Do you think——"

"What does it matter, mother? If money is the question, the Gillbanks could buy up the Montjoys; but I did think we were above such things."

Forster coloured with indignation.

"Oh, Forster dear; of course, poor dears, I don't mind. They are all so nice, but London people——"

"We are not London people, and if my friends are not good enough——" Forster stopped short; he knew his temper was hasty at times. "By the way, Dora, Miss Gillbanks is worldly, I think; shall I propose to her?"

"Mr. Gillbanks's sister can't be worldly. He is so awfully jolly," was Dora's reply.

"Dora, that is not the ladylike English," said her governess.

"I hate slangy girls," added Forster, and Dora blushed with shame at her brother's displeasure.

"Everybody says things like that," she murmured.

"You are not 'everybody,' Dora," said Forster.

Dora at once registered a vow against slang, though Adela immediately came to the rescue.

"Dora hardly ever talks slang, Forster; you should not scold her."

Mary rose from the table.

"I'm engaged till lunch-time, please, in my room; don't let any one come in."

"When your violin is squeaking no one wants to come," said Forster quickly.

He could not understand Mary's silent musical life. To him it seemed intensely selfish, but Adela always defended her sister; indeed, Adela never allowed any one to be found fault with if she could help it, especially a member of her own family, so she turned the conversation.

"I wish we could avoid having so many invitations."

"I do my best, I'm sure," said Mrs. Bethune; "I go somewhere every day, and if I can I get your father to go with me. I'm sure it's very good and kind of people to give parties. We don't give half enough, Dora says. Where are you going this morning, Adela?"

"I must go to Letitia's Girls' Club, and, you know, mother, the committee of the Pit Girl Society is to meet here this afternoon."

"They will expect me to take part. Poor dears, I think the agenda says something about making them dress like men. I'm sure it's right, because Lady Grace is

in the chair—she always dresses so very simply herself."

"Mother dear, you have mixed it up," said Dora. "It was to abolish the work for pit girls. Forster, should girls work at the pit's mouth?"

"Yes, certainly; with proper regulations it is healthful and grand. I wish half our ball young ladies had a month of such work."

"Not in tights, dear Forster; but if you think it right I'll vote for it. I'm sure you know best."

"I'm off to the City. I want to see Messrs. Hurne about my pamphlet. They are so slow about the proofs."

"Have I read it, Forster dear?" said his mother.

"No, mother. You would not quite like it. It's a pamphlet about abolishing all titles and all money rewards for merit. It does seem so terrible that we still care about such petty things."

"But the Government means it kindly, Forster. When they offered your father a title they wrote very civilly; they said the Queen wished it. It seemed a pity to disappoint her, but I quite agreed. I'm sure the name of Bethune is better than any title."

"It isn't for that reason, mother. You see, if we expect rewards we can't be sure of our motives. I'm looking about for the man who expects no reward and yet does his duty."

"There's your father, dear. You need not look very far."

Forster smiled.

"I must look outside my own family."

"I don't see why you should. Dora, don't forget the Gillbankers. Give me 'The Morning Post,' dear, and see if the Duchess has come to town yet."

"If Aunt Mary comes to dine here, mother, I shall have an engagement. She irritates me," said Forster.

His lips were set firm, for his aunt, the Duchess, ridiculed all his ideas.

"No, Forster, she won't come. It wouldn't do with those poor dear Gillbankers. She would want their pedigree, and wouldn't quite understand the screws and how really nice they are. Your aunt is very clever, you know, and never forgets her engagements."

"I can't think why the title of a Duchess always sounds snobby," said Adela, laughing, "and yet Aunt Mary would be horrified to hear me say so."

"She says I'm seen too much," said Dora. "She wants me to be shut up in a

prison till I'm out. I can't bear Aunt Mary. Men don't fall in love with our Mary, and they won't with me, so why should we take care of our complexions? It's only Adela who has lovers. I wish you wouldn't smile so much, Adela dear, and the men wouldn't think you liked them. They do leave so many bouquets for you, and you don't care for any of them."

"Yes, I like them all, but I suppose I shall know when I am in love."

"There's a sale at Sotheby's to-day," said Mr. Bethune, looking up from perusing papers. "The first edition of Marlow's plays is going to be sold. I must go and see about it. When do you want the carriage, any of you? Dora, just make a list of the times and seasons, dear child."

Dora rose, and with a sigh once more began arranging for the family. She declared she worked harder than Aunt Mary's maid, whom Forster called "the white slave."

THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL.

IN THREE PARTS. PART III.

A TRAMP BY IT

THERE is little enough in the present city of Manchester to recall the antiquity of its origin. On the evening after my trip by the "Fairy Queen," I left the quiet "Mitre Hotel"—my two bedroom windows looked into the calm graveyard of the cathedral and at its illuminated clock, which had not, I am glad to say, a trick of chiming the quarters—and killed an hour in the library. In the vestibule of the building there is a print of Manchester and Salford as they were in 1710-30. No tall chimneys then—or none aggressively assertive! The cathedral tower appears benignly dominant over the pretty little market town. Irwell is shown flowing attractively between its banks in the town's vicinity. A gentleman in the theatrical attire of the early Georgian time stands in the foreground. And the sky is as clear as an engraver can make it.

From the picture I had but to wander down the gaudy streets—with electrical dazzle here and there—to that confusing mass of railway building known as the Victoria and Exchange stations. Near at hand Irwell sneaks covertly in its dark and pestilential bed. A more brutal parody of nature as one sees her among the green fields cannot be found than this

dreary spectacle of Irwell in Manchester's midst, with the horrid fringe of stranded garbage instead of waving rushes and undergrowth, such as the kingfisher loves to flash stealthily by.

Poor Irwell! She cannot help herself. She is devoted to the service of man. Mills buzz and whirl on all sides of her meandering stream in the city; she sees little of the "heaven's own azure"; and her aspect is so melancholy that it is conceivable that ere now a man has tied a brick round the neck of his dog or his cat and hurled the victim into the black ooze, from sheer murderous impulse provoked by the river. It is the sort of stream *Doré* might have drawn inspiration from had he been requisitioned to illustrate Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night." I forget if Thomson gives his depressing metropolis a river; but he could not better have piled on its agony than by giving it an Irwell.

And yet of old this brook was famous for its trout, and may continue to be, nearer its source.

Close to the "Mitre Hotel"—which is not of so episcopal a character as its name had led me to imagine it—are two or three remnants of Manchester as it was some three centuries ago. One ancient house in the shambles is especially good to look upon, with its bow gables, its black and white exterior, and its suggestive diamond panes. There are market stalls set in the narrow street adjacent, and just a flavour of mediæval life may be had by focussing the fancy upon the house and the hucksters. Hard by, however, is one of the most capacious of the modern city's lungs, and the contrast between this agitated thoroughfare, with its tall-hatted business men, its large shop windows and all the luxuries they display, and the little old house in the shambles is too glaring for modest sentiment to endure.

But enough of these profitless imaginings.

I had seen the Canal from the water. Having spent a night of ecclesiastical tranquillity at the "Mitre" after the excitement of the voyage, I designed to devote several hours of the next morning to a walk along the Canal banks. Even as a philosopher is not satisfied with subjective knowledge, but craves also objective knowledge, so I wished to look down upon the Canal from its shores, and still further deepen my acquaintance with it.

I chose my walk at a venture. It was the stage from Latchford to Runcorn. Weather and the road permitting, I might

even get on to Ellesmere, but I was not sanguine about that.

Again the portents were singularly bright for the season. There was snow on the cathedral tombstones when I drew up my blind; but ere I had done with my fried sole and the conversation of two genial commercials from London, one of whom was interested in shipments of tinned meats, the sun was out and licking up the snow.

I took train to Warrington, or Werinton, as they called it in the time of Henry the Third. The docks were still a very tulip bed for the colours of their bunting, as we passed them; and the trumpeting of a steamer could be heard through the thick air. But my companions heeded not the docks. They read their papers like the methodical business men they looked, and especially they read the columns of description of the festival of the day before.

Now Warrington from the railway does not tempt eulogy. One thinks of it as the natal place of much soap, ale, gin, wire, and so forth—all useful enough commodities, but either smelling offensively in their development or demanding, it would seem, unsightly chimneys and factories.

I was therefore quite pleasantly surprised when I left the railway station and almost at once set eyes on two or three houses, the coevals of that in the shambles of Manchester. The "Barley-mow Inn," in the market-place, is a jewel of a building, with its date, 1661, upon it. It is quaint, as picturesque as all half-timbered and gabled houses are, and piquantly sequestered. I excited some notice by my evident absorption in the old place, with its coarsely carved timbers and black oak lintel to its yard.

There is also the "Fox Inn," of the same kidney; and I observed a small butcher's shop, dated 1649, set unassumingly between houses of a much more modern stamp.

For the rest, Warrington has been a place of culture as well as a noted emporium for soap. In the last century the Eyres' press here was locally as famous as that of Baskerville in Birmingham.

Nowadays, however, once these old time houses have been admired, one cannot but notice that clogs rule the roost here. We are in Lancashire, yet only just, and the clatter of clogged feet on the paving stones strikes the predominant note of the place—aye, and of the district extending far north and north-east.

The people, too, talk "Lancashire," alighting the definite article.

I asked my way to Latchford.

"Be you going across Canal?" was the question in rejoinder.

"Yes," said I. "I hope to get across Canal."

"Then," was the reply, "you'll have to take swing-bridge. They open it to let steamboats go past."

Not a definite article anywhere, you see.

I shame to say I did not until this day know that Warrington was on the Mersey. However, if I were Warrington I should be even more ashamed of being on so ill-looking a river. I am quite tired of prattling about the indescribable repulsiveness of these black streams of Lancashire; but they thrust themselves upon notice.

A mile or so from Warrington I skirted the Mersey where it makes one of its most graceful curves. On the other side were meadows, with a substantial white house in a park and a church spire of the town rising prettily above the trees. There was a small weir in the river and an islet with a house on it.

Taking this landscape as it stood, it would look soothing and delightfully rural done on paper by a deft pencil. But Mersey seen with the eyes of sense spoiled all. Its inky flood, the nauseous stains upon its banks and the rubbish it deposited were a grievous disillusionment.

From this standpoint I walked into Latchford village in a few minutes, past "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese," a wayside tavern, the tannery, and the various new gabled houses which brighten the little place.

From a commercial aspect, the Ship Canal ought to be the making of Latchford. I noticed new houses springing up, and also placards indicating land for sale. Had I a few loose thousands, they should go in Latchford land.

There is a drawback, though, to the place for residential purposes. The Warrington and Stockport railway rattles its trains noisily across the Canal on one of the "deviation" bridges. And, as if that riot were not enough, the steamers in the Canal will be blowing steam night and day in their appeals to the lock-masters to prepare for them. Anything more trying to weak nerves than the discords some of these boats raise can hardly be imagined. Heard in the dead of night, they are worse than a concert of cats.

Of course, it is possible to get used

to anything. Suburban Londoners, for example, say they do not mind the trains which screech every quarter of an hour past their back gardens. But think of the sacrifice of brain tissue of price—or rather of priceless worth—that such a state of wooden insensitiveness involves.

There were two steamers in the Latchford lock, and I was able to see the process of their raising to perfection. Its simplicity need not be commented upon. One of the boats was merely an impetuous steam-tug, impatient to get back to Liverpool. The other carried cargo; not a full burden, but just enough to license its owner in sending it to make its *début* in the Manchester docks. Had I tarried at Latchford a score of hours more—a most unlikely thing, however—I should have seen yet another trial tripper, this time from the sunny Mediterranean, with ropes of oranges binding her masts together. It may be safely said that the great cotton city will appreciate none of the boons of its Canal more than this of getting its fruit straight from the South, much more cheaply than of yore.

From the lock I returned to the swing-bridge, and joined a little throng of butcher boys, school children, blooming maidens—the air was keen and heightened their colour—and others in admiring the ease with which a thousand tons of iron may be sent to the right about by a lever and a man. They cut it rather fine in moving this bridge, to suit the convenience of a gentleman in a dogcart coming from Warrington, who seemed eager to cross. This provoked some mad screeches from the approaching steam-tug. But all went well, and the tug swept along in the muddy water, which it sent in long agitated undulations up the red sides of the cutting.

This cutting by Latchford is remarkable for being the most extensive in the whole Canal. It is a mile and a half in length, with sides as perpendicular as possible, and fifty-five feet in height. Take the average bottom width of the Canal as here available to the surface of the water; viz, one hundred and twenty feet, and there is an easy yet interesting sum for a boy or girl to tackle, to ascertain the number of yards of rock taken from this cutting alone.

By the way, it was here at Latchford that, on the Saturday night preceding the opening of the Canal, an accident occurred which persons afflicted with the

taste for omens might have regarded with discontent. The yacht "Norseman," which, on the first of January, excited so many complimentary exclamations by its beautiful lines and delicacy of movement, here and then, lost one of its engineers. The poor fellow was returning to the ship from Warrington towards ten o'clock, and in the darkness and the fog misjudged his movements and stepped into the Canal. Its sheer sides made rescue almost impossible, and he was drowned.

It may as well be repeated: the sooner the Ship Canal Company determine to light the whole five-and-thirty miles of their waterway with electricity, the better it will be for the public. Were I the loving father or mother of five or six young children, as active and curious about novelties as most children, I would not live at Latchford on any account until more precautions than at present exist were taken to prevent access to the Canal sides.

From Latchford I proceeded due west by the new road skirting the Canal. I judged by the crowds on the Canal side here the previous day that a thoroughfare ran all the way hence to Runcorn, some eight miles. But I was soon to be undeceived.

For half a mile or so, there was a road, with terraces of new red houses facing the Canal. The houses were of the fifteen-pounder style, commodious to look at, and I hope more conscientiously built than their comrades of the kind elsewhere. No notice need have been taken of them, but for the fact that they were a reminder that the Canal company holds a quantity of land continuous with its cutting, which may well be turned to account in terraces like these. Of the total area purchased for the work, four thousand five hundred and twenty acres, no fewer than two thousand five hundred are now surplus.

It is interesting enough to live within viewing distance of the Thames below Gravesend. But here in the North one may do much better. The Ship Canal is not, like the Thames in its lower reaches, hugged by aguey flats for miles. One may live near enough to its water to cast eggshells and cabbage stalks into it from one's back premises—if that were not a crime against the Canal punishable by law. Out of question ere long there will be plenty to see on this waterway. Indeed, I foresee the time when retired "salts" and others addicted to the

ocean will be eager to spend their declining days with their telescopes and memories on the banks of the Ship Canal. Let the Company prepare for them by building rows of snug houses on its surplus lands, being suitably lavish in the matter of venetian masts with weathercocks, derelict figure-heads, and the like trifles, so dear to the heart of the superannuated mariner.

But these terraces soon came to an end and I had to turn inland. I struck a high road, with a mile-stone telling me I might reach Frodsham or Chester thereon. I passed fields with the tall posts indicative of the rage for Rugby Union football which holds this part of England fast in thrall. The sun, meanwhile, had gone from sight and snow began to descend. It seemed to me a quite futile feat of enthusiasm to continue walking along this hard high-road till I came to either Frodsham or Chester, at this time of the year.

However, upon enquiry, I learnt that anon I might hope to double back to the water, to which I had come to feel oddly attached. Even as it was, I had not lost touch with it, if I may be excused the looseness of expression. I heard the miauling of its steamers, with the occasional more honest and downright shout of foghorns.

Once—it was at the "Ship Inn"—I tried an illegitimate path to the banks. But I had to return. This "Ship Inn" is a hoary hostelry—its crude signboard so proclaimed it. They little thought, who built it and gave it its picture of a schooner with all sails set, that in 1894 ships as big as that on its board would be moving within sight of the little inn—and not on Mersey either!

The snow ceased, and again the wintry sun broke through the heavy clouds with their edges of liquid gold. Happily I had the wind, which blew with a biting sting, at my back.

I came to Walton, a village that would be engaging if it were not within hearing of the riot of so many trains. I never saw land so cut up by railway lines. But they speak a rural speech in Walton. The lads who urged me to desist from trying to enter the Walton church had a brogue that I enjoyed. But they seethed me in discouragement by assuring me that, as well as they knew, I could not get to Runcorn except by retracing my steps and making acquaintance again with Warrington. Now I had seen enough of Warrington, and I would rather have braced myself

for Frodsham or Chester than have gone to the right about. I fancy that was a thoroughly English trait in me—was it not? I say it without pride, for no man is wholly responsible for, or may reasonably plume himself upon being what he is.

For a moment or two I paused to admire a token of generous condescension on the part of the local Squire. I will not mention the Squire's name. There was snow upon the "token," or else I would have made momentary use of it. In fact, the "token" was just a low and somewhat inconvenient stone slab inscribed "Traveller's rest, the gift of — Esq." It was decked with green mould, where it was not white with snow. Seat it could not be called, so much as a stone step. For my part, were I a wayfarer of the weary and necessitous kind, I would try the five-barred gates for a quarter of a mile on either side of this "traveller's rest" rather than risk a chill to the bones by sitting on a cold stone ledge planted in the earth at so inconveniently low an elevation. If his respectability the Squire who set this mark of kindness for the lowly born did it in fanciful atonement for his sins, he may be cordially congratulated. He cannot have gone much astray during his earthly pilgrimage, or else never was man less generous in his bargainings.

In Walton they told me I might come at the Moore swing-bridge and thus cross the Canal, and, if I would take the rugged road of the navvies, get to Runcorn. I got this intelligence confirmed ere I viewed it as gospel.

"And the distance to Moore?" I enquired of the kindly hedger and ditcher who had paused, bill in hand, to help me.

"One mile," he said, and I left him, grateful and comforted.

I walked a good Cheshire mile, and asked another man how far I might have yet to go.

"A mile and a half," was the reply, plump.

These trials appertain to rural parts all the world over. You would suppose that the rage for universal education had changed such idiosyncrasies in Hodge and Co. of late. It appears otherwise. Either the true-born peasant is as ignorant of linear measurement as ever he was, or he takes to a life as eagerly as a schoolboy to a new half-crown. Anyway, he is little to be relied upon for information outside his own most restricted sphere of positive knowledge.

A quarter of a mile further and I espied

the welcome bridge, and a fire of coal at its southern side, round which women, and men, and boys were clustered. The bridge-keepers were at liberty to eat, drink, and talk merrily, and they—and their wives—seemed to be doing so.

Once more, therefore, I crossed the Ship Canal. A white fox-terrier dog revolved in an eddy beneath the bridge, drifting slowly towards the sea. How had the poor dead brute come hither? No matter. It is a sight the navigators of this waterway must get accustomed to. Moreover, life has worse spectacles, and more mysterious. In our journey by the "Fairy Queen" the day before we had, at one of the locks, listened to the eloquent levity of a person with the "gift of the gab" on board an adjacent steamer. In the course of his speech, which begat abounding laughter, he assured us he was profoundly interested in the Ship Canal. "To what extent?" somebody retorted. "To this extent, gentlemen," was his prompt rejoinder; "the most valuable dog I ever had was drowned in it."

The public of North Cheshire and South Lancashire are entreated not to pollute the Canal with the dead bodies of their pets. Already the poor young stream has a grievance in the sewage that reaches it, directly and by contact with the Mersey. If once the people get into the habit of regarding it as a mixen five-and-thirty miles long, we may give up the fine hopes built upon it as a residential attraction. In time the Manchester sewage will be subjected to a searching system of purification, and only afterwards be allowed to filtrate into the Canal. May the work be speedily accomplished! It will be a pity if the dock labourers at Salford are compelled to do their work with disinfectants suspended from their noses. Before January the first, there were complaints on this score which much detracted from the charm discovered by newspaper writers in this sun-flushed pool of scores of acres in the middle of Cottonopolis.

But to resume my itinerary.

Having at last got on the right side of the Canal, I set my face straight for Runcorn. Certificated high-road there was none. I had four or five miles before me that recalled other rough miles I had travelled; in Florida, for example, along a line of railway in formation, with darkies felling trees on one hand, and laying the metals on the other.

Happily the frost of the night still held.

Otherwise I should have looked askant at this rugged track vermiculating over the uneven ground, amid waggons, broken machinery, holes, and much else.

A more depressing tongue of land than this peninsula stretching from Warrington, between the Canal and the Mersey to Runcorn, you will not find in England. Even the Thames marshes are without the tall chimneys of Widnes and Runcorn, which smear the heavens with their smoke, and vitiate the air with their effluvia.

On this day I had the wind strong upon me from Mersey. But there was nothing enjoyable in its breath. I drew up my coat collar and hoped to be in Runcorn ere an hour had sped.

But I was not. There was much to see by the way, and in places I had to go softly. Ever and anon, too, a locomotive snorted at me to get off the rails if I did not mean to try a wrestle with it. I had to stand aside and let it go by with a dash, the ill-set rails rising and falling beneath it like the ice of a pool strained by a crowd of skaters.

Of human interest there was enough here. It lay in the thousands of trucks which had done such good work since 1887, as well as in the frigid, exposed little village of shanties planted by the Canal side among steam navvies and a world of refuse.

The "T. A. W." on the trucks recalled the late Mr. Walker, who, on June the eighth, 1887, received the entire contract for the Ship Canal Works—surely one of the most monumental orders ever an employer of labour was blessed with! But the Ship Canal has been of no advantage to this famous man. Mr. Walker died on the twenty-fifth of November, 1889, and a year later the Canal Company took over all the works and plant in hand from his executors.

The trucks show the nature of the labour they have been engaged in. Some of them have their upper parts splintered to match-wood. The wilderness of mounds is bestrewn with chips and billets of the wood. They were not made for ladylike handling, these trucks, nor have they received it. A few hundreds of them will be devoted to firewood when the Canal Works' effects are disposed of; unless, indeed, Mersey's pungent air—and that of the chemical factories—brings yet earlier dissolution upon them.

Navvies in files passed me periodically, big ruddy fellows most of them, walking

advertisements of the virtues of honest open-air toil. Ere long I struck their dinner-hour, and then I came upon them in groups of twenties, sitting under the lee of the yellow soil banks, with their coffee-cans warming by the fires at their feet. The black fantastic shapes of the rusted steam navvies rose betwixt them and the Canal they had excavated.

As for the Canal itself, I gave it up. In the aspect it then presented it seemed no way more remarkable than an ordinary inland Canal for horse traffic—save indeed in its width. For half an hour nothing moved on it. Then a tug skimmed by into the far-off haze of Runcorn. She bore some of the previous day's bunting, which looked garish in this sombre atmosphere.

The navvies' cottages next drew notice upon them; poor thin edifices of a single storey, facing the Canal, and with potatoe peelings and the bluish stains of soap-suds conspicuous about them. Clothes-lines decorated their vicinity. Disconsolate poultry perched on tiles and mops, and seemed too inert even to explore their own plumage. A dragged woman with bare forearm looked out here and there and cried for "Billy" or "Tommy," with an emphatic "drat him!" or something of the kind if no response was given.

I was curious about the interiors of these temporary homes. It was easy to satisfy my curiosity. The house I was invited into was as higgledy-piggledy as the Canal banks in the neighbourhood. A cake of drenched soap lay on a table near a loaf of bread, which was gradually incorporating its ooze. A cat lifted an eye of appealing woe to me, and as much as asked, "Did you ever see the like of this for the home of a working man earning his seven or eight shillings a day?" Disorder and dirt were rampant. And the walls of the room were loosely papered with fragments of fifty different patterns, which from their grime might have been rescued from a Runcorn ashpit.

And yet I daresay when the Ship Canal job is over, the tenants of this dismal camp will settle down elsewhere and form as neat a home as need be. The transitory does not stimulate like the permanent.

Were it worth while, I could wonder what kind of eggs these Ship Canal barrack hens are able to lay. I would, at any rate, rather analyse than eat them.

But there were children here as elsewhere. They more than aught else seemed to consecrate the omnipresent dreariness. And

in one of the house windows half-a-dozen bottles of sweets, some biscuits, oranges, and white clay pipes told of the trading instinct in one member of the community. The sale for pipes ought indeed to be somewhat extensive, though less so doubtless than formerly, when all the Company's thousands of operatives were in full pay.

One more touch and I have done with this little village, which might yet appeal to a man for its drama as much as any palace. The sweets and clay pipes were witnesses to the navvies' need for mild luxuries. A single room in one of the houses, with green blinds and the word "Mission" on its window, hinted at other needs.

A mile further, and I chanced upon the missioner himself, carrying (significant symbols!) in one hand a lantern he had just bought and in the other a packet of tracts. Simultaneously, though in opposite directions, he and I passed a knot of men at work. I was entertained to mark the variety of expressions that sat upon their faces as these horny-handed and broad-shouldered fellows eyed the tracts. Some were evidently in sympathy with the little books and their distributor: some were as evidently antipathetic to both.

Thank Heaven, Runcorn is appreciably nearer now. The track is really most rugged for a layman.

At this point I come again cheek by jowl with Mersey. The estuary is here very broad, and the tide is out. There are miles of glistening black mud to be seen; though the glisten is not due to sunlight. Creeks, too, with deep, soft sides, the thought of slipping into which raises a shudder.

And, as I live, hardly have I condemned the outlook as quite supremely nauseous, when I am confronted with a difficulty that may end in plunging me fathoms down in this same mud. For railway purposes they have had to build a light bridge over one of these creeks and put sleepers on it. There is no other track for the pedestrian. The sleepers are set most unmethodically, some but six inches apart and some two feet. And thirty feet under a stream like a sewer swings its way into the estuary between two sloped banks of filth.

I should have made little of this trial of nerve if the bridge had been over a green field. But the idea of suffocation in such a quagmire was lamentably dispiriting, and I do not mind confessing that I stood for full thirty seconds in hesitation, eyeing the mud.

There was, however, no help for it. I could not, on my manhood, turn tail—with Runcorn already well within smell. And so I braced myself and stepped out. Some of the sleepers were villainously awry, and the sight of the bottom to the pit they formed was sufficiently disturbing. But my valour—which somehow seems less now than it seemed then—met with its reward. I felt as rejoiced when I was on the other side as if I had been presented with a return ticket to a distant continent.

A kindly navy grinned at me as he said, "You'd have fell soft there, sir, anyhow!" He never spoke a truer word.

One more episode of the Mersey mud and I have done with it—I hope for ever. About a stone's throw from this bridge, a black shape was seen set in the mud of the river proper. Its contour was that of an ark—a residence, in fact, on a boatwise keel, with windows and a door; and on its stern was the inscription:

"Beds, tea, coffee, and cocoa from five a.m."

Such a sleeping place, amid such fetid surroundings, was enough to alarm the imagination. Nevertheless, the navy constitution is so robust that it has probably come well out of the trials of even such a dormitory.

Thence onwards up the narrowing peninsula, with the great railway bridge looming through the vapour of the factories. Mersey's wide mouth—contracted again at the bridge point—seemed to suggest that the millions spent on the Ship Canal might more profitably have been spent in keeping a navigable channel in the natural river, and delving east of Runcorn only. But this scheme has been pronounced upon and condemned. At any rate the Ship Canal is almost independent of tidal agitation and whims, which, of course, Mersey is not.

I came at length to the very tip of this long uncomely tongue of land, the Canal on the left, Mersey broad on the right and in front. The two waterways run for a spell westwards hence, side by side, separated at high tide by nothing except a concrete wall and a mighty embankment, still in process of completion.

And so, having done with the oxide works, which occupy and perfume this extremity, I climbed to the Runcorn swing-bridge and ascended yet higher through the mean streets of the town to its railway station.

A guide book that is before me—a dozen

years old, to be sure—says of Runcorn that it is “much resorted to for bathing in the summer season.” It is barely conceivable, unless the bathers are accomplished mudlarks or persons of no fixed calling, who take to the Mersey here in the warm months in quest of floating valuables. However, in any case, I am afraid the Ship Canal will interfere considerably with Runcorn’s fame as a bathing place.

They celebrated the opening of the Canal as much here as anywhere. And rightly so, for the hundreds of workers on the embankment lodge in the town.

By the water-side, on an elevation, is another mission room for the navvies. Here, on the door, was a placard telling of “a public ham tea on the tables from half-past four to half-past seven on January the first, 1894. Ninapence each.”

Of Runcorn I can think of nothing more to say, except that its Wesleyan Chapel of St. Paul’s seems to me the largest and most braggart building of its kind I have ever seen. It carries a façade with two swollen towers. There are foreign cathedrals that at first sight have affected me less than this chapel. But Runcorn’s pride—it must be that—will not bear scrutiny. Its leonine magnificence in front goes ill with its sordid hind-quarters of commonplace red brick.

There was not time on the short wintry day to proceed to the mouth of the Weaver, as I had hoped. Besides, the snow now came in quick, fierce squalls.

I was hungry, and had an hour or two on my hands ere a train would serve me. But the hotel, upon whose mercy I cast myself, could do no better than offer me bread and cheese. The meat had not been delivered. I sat there eating bread and cheese, in company with a succession of clean-looking women, who came and asked for spirituous nips and warmed their toes by the fire. I never saw more reputable toppers. They took their fluids almost deprecatingly. One of them, indeed, proffered me a sort of apology: “The inside do get such a chill, sir, this weather,” she said.

And now enough of the Canal.

Commercially it seems to have a satisfactory future before it. Its owners, at any rate, have confidence in it. You may not hope soon to pick up shares in it for a mere song.

On the other hand, scenically it does not enthrall—at present. The Gotha Canal in Sweden is more interesting. But when

the Manchester cutting has established itself as one of the world’s most populous highways, then things will be different. No reach of England will then be more fascinating, alike to men of a practical turn and men of imagination.

AN EVIL EYE.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE boats returned in no regular order in the evening. People started when they chose, and loitered or hurried as they felt inclined, and that one which contained the pair of lovers seemed naturally to fall behind the rest.

There was one part of the return voyage which no one had considered in any possible way as dangerous, which proved itself so rather strangely. They had to pass close to a weir, after leaving the little lock, which was picturesquely out of repair, and Georgie, who was steering, was much too full of laughing at some joke of Laurie’s to pay attention to the ropes. She was, moreover, inexperienced with them. She gave the wrong cord a mighty jerk to free the boat from some reed, and before any of them had realised there was anything the matter, with the laugh still on their lips, the boat was overturned, and they were all struggling in the water. Laurie naturally seized Georgie. Madge’s dress had got entangled with some weeds; she felt the water close over her head, and gave herself up for lost.

She knew no more till she was conscious of a voice, hoarse, strange, and broken, in her ear.

“Not this one, too! Oh, heaven, not another!”

She slowly opened her eyes, to find herself lying on the bank, supported by Laurie’s friend, whose ghastly and agonised face, contorted by strong passion, bent over her. She looked at him vaguely, and repeated the words she had heard in her own mind; she did not put any sense to them till afterwards. He was absolutely transported with wild and trembling ecstacy as he met her eyes; so evidently so that she thought nothing of his holding her hands to his lips and pressing frantic kisses upon them.

“Where is Laurie?” she asked trembling, but not resentful.

“Gone to the mill—with Georgie—to fetch some brandy. You are better! You are not hurt! I thought I was too

late. I thought—heavens! I thought I had killed you too!”

“Mr. L'Estrange!”

“What am I saying? Forgive me. For the moment I was beside myself—you would not wonder if you knew. May I carry you? I don't think you can walk in your wet clothes. You won't mind my carrying you to the mill?”

“No.”

Madge found no other word to say; she could not meet his eyes. Something utterly subdued and terrified her. In a moment she found herself gently but strongly raised, and carried on his shoulder as easily as if she had been a little child. His lean and sinewy form had great strength and endurance.

A fire, dry clothes, and hot tea soon revived her body, but her mind did not so speedily recover itself. She could not help an hysterical fit of crying, which she had only power to keep under so long as Laurie and his friend were present. Mr. L'Estrange showed no more emotion; he had resumed his ordinary cold and non-chalant manner; and beyond the fact that he was and remained of a ghastly pallor, kept no trace of the passion that had shaken him. Madge, whose active tongue was seldom at a loss, had not a word now for any one. She had lost all her vivacity and audacious frankness, and was thankful to be driven to Elstead in the miller's trap and to get to bed as soon as possible.

Her night's rest, however, did not revive her; she had frightful dreams; all the time she felt herself struggling frantically in dark waters, a cold clutch of thin hands seemed dragging her into horrible depths. She woke with a shriek of uttermost terror, and was thankful to find herself in a light and cheerful world, where it was possible to throw off the dread and gloom of the hours she had passed. Yet after the first relief some of the impression remained. Madge could not rid herself of the idea of the evil eye. She, and she alone, had heard these words, “Why not believe in it? It is true;” and these others, “Not this one too—not another!”

A little more and she would have been that other victim. Why was she snatched from the fate that accompanied him? Was her life to be connected with his? What was the meaning of the strange thrill, half horror, half bliss, which had run through her veins when he kissed her hands, when he lifted her in his arms?

Ah, she was not the girl to rescue a

man's life, to restore it from despair! She knew herself—vain, frivolous, idle, capricious, often light-minded. Jim L'Estrange's married life needed a stronger and a more loving hand than hers to set it right! But if a woman could do it, Madge thought it would be worth while to suffer a good deal, to give up much, to attain such a destiny.

“Is the poor fellow to go on till he dies shunning every one, afraid even of friendship, feeling himself under a curse? Is there any one strong enough and brave enough to throw in her lot with his, and save him from that dreadful loneliness? Oh, I wish I were the one to say I dared!”

Laurie came in with her early cup of tea to ask her how she was. He sat on the bed and contemplated her gravely.

“By Jove, Madge, it's taken a lot out of you! You look like a little ghost. I hope you don't blame me for thinking first of Georgie!”

“My dear boy, of course not. You couldn't get us both ashore. Is Georgie all right?”

“Oh, as right as ninepence. She hardly turned a hair. You were longer in the water. By Jove, what a funk we were all in! As for Jim, he was completely off his head. He vowed you were dead and it was his doing. ‘No,’ poor Georgie said, ‘it was mine. I steered.’ ‘But I was in the boat. I was in the boat,’ he kept saying. Then he sent me off for brandy. I was glad when he carried you in alive after all. I say, Madge, I really believe poor old Jim thinks he has that ill luck about him. Did you notice how he stared at the fellow who told that story about the Greek Johnny and the evil eye?”

Madge nodded.

“Well, but one can't think there's really anything in it—of course one believes in luck, you know. There's some people that always sweep the board and others that never hold a decent card. But that's different, that's the sort of thing that only hurts oneself, you know. It can't be that a decent fellow like Jim should have the power of harming other people without wishing it. But he fancies he has, that's the worst of it. He refused point blank to be my best man yesterday evening. I couldn't get any reason out of him till I pushed him hard, and then he said he wasn't going to bring any ill luck on me if he knew it. It's awfully rum, isn't it?”

"I knew he would refuse," Madge said slowly and heavily, in a tone so unlike her usual one that her brother, whose real affection for her was equal to the chariness of its expression, looked at her pale and downcast face with dismay.

"I say, old Madgie! This go yesterday hasn't really made you ill, has it?"

"Oh, no; I'm not ill."

"You don't look very fit."

"It was a shock, of course. I don't think I feel quite up to much talk, Laurie, dear."

"All right. I'll cut, then. Shall you get up?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I don't want to make a fuss. Oh, yes, I shall come down to lunch, but I shan't go with the rest this afternoon, and no one is to stop, mind—I'd rather be alone. Tell Mrs. Brandon so. Make her understand, Laurie, I won't have any one victimising herself that I may have to talk pretty. I shall get all right if I'm left alone with a nice book."

Laurie accordingly managed that the rest of the party set off for their afternoon's excursion, leaving Madge on the sofa in the cool, tree-shaded drawing-room, which opened on to the lawn. She had her book, but it did not seem to interest her; she did not turn many pages, and her usually careless, piquant little face wore an expression that was strange to it.

Just as she was beginning to wonder whether tea would cheer her downcast mood at all, a visitor was announced who, if not exactly cheering, proved at least an exciting stimulant. It was Mr. L'Estrange, who had called to enquire after Miss Lifford, and whom a stupid servant had ushered straight into her solitude.

He started and flushed a little when he saw her there alone.

"I—I did not expect to see you, Miss Lifford," he stammered; "I only called to ask how you were. I did not know Laurie was out; in fact, I understood the servant to say 'not.'"

"Laurie has gone to the Barnhurst Flower Show with the rest. I preferred staying quietly by myself."

"I hope you are not ill?" He spoke in a tone of poignant anxiety quite incommensurate to the cause.

"Not at all; only a wee bit shaky. I was glad of the excuse to get out of it. Such functions are apt to be a little ghastly."

There was an acute sort of pause, which both felt to be painful, and yet

were not at the moment ready enough to break. Then Jim said suddenly, in an unnatural, strained sort of voice:

"Well, Miss Lifford, I did not intend to see you, but since it has happened, I am glad of the chance of wishing you good-bye."

"Good-bye! I thought you were staying some time longer in the neighbourhood."

"I—I did think of it, but I've changed my mind. I never stay long anywhere, you know, Miss Lifford."

"Where are you going?"

"Home—I mean to my mother's, just to settle things up, and then—I don't know exactly—somewhere remote. I shall see."

"Do you like wandering about like that, or is it only a habit?"

"Like it? No, not particularly; better than staying in one place, perhaps. I'm a kind of Wandering Jew, you know." He gave that short little laugh of his, which was further removed from mirth than tears could be. "If the theory of transmigration of souls is true, I must have committed some unpardonable crime in another life, and have to expiate it now. That is the only way in which I can account for things. Miss Lifford, I do hope you are not really the worse for yesterday?"

"Oh, no, not in the least! I am only a little tired, and my nerves, I suppose, are upset. Don't fancy that in the least. Besides, the accident was not your fault. On the contrary, I owe you my life. I hope I did thank you yesterday, but I fear I have not expressed any proper gratitude."

"Gratitude! That would be absurd. On the contrary, I ought to ask you to forgive my having come in the boat with you."

"What can you mean? Why should you not have come?"

"I knew I ought not. I could not resist the temptation. Miss Lifford! May I talk quite freely and openly with you before we part? I know I have only just made your acquaintance. I shall go away and never see you any more, yet I feel as if I knew you—as if we had met and been friends somewhere—perhaps because I was Laurie's friend, and it would be a great, an immense relief to me! Only if you had rather I did not, I will say good-bye now, and not bother you any longer."

"Oh, don't go away yet," Madge cried impulsively. "I should be so glad if

you would talk to me—I have been thinking a great deal about you!”

“You have been thinking about me! And why, Miss Lifford?”

“You—somehow you interested me—I mean—Laurie talked so much of you—and—and you were not like anybody else——”

“No, I should hope not. I should be sorry to think there was another man in the world as unlucky as I.”

“But isn’t that a superstition, an idea?”

He looked at her hard without speaking for a minute, and she felt herself quailing and trembling under the gaze of those strange light eyes. He saw that she did so, and dropped them, saying in a dull, level voice, “You see it is not fancy. I have the evil eye. You shiver under it.”

“No—no,” she struggled to say, “I am not myself—I told you—that must be only a superstition.”

“I assure you it is not. Miss Lifford, you have been good enough to express interest in me you tempt me to tell you something about myself which I have never said to any one in the world! I do not think it can hurt you much, though it is a dreary story to listen to; and it will be a great relief to me, besides making you understand that if we never meet again it is not because I do not care to be with you, but that I am afraid of caring too much. Will you let me talk and will you forgive me?”

“Not forgive,” she said in rather a stifled voice, and involuntarily she stretched her hand out to him, “I should like to help you—to comfort you if I could.”

He put her hand gently to his lips, and then laid it beside her. Perhaps Madge had meant him to keep it; the little action had something touching in it to her, something of renunciation. “How kind you are to me!” he said softly, “I see you are Laurie’s sister. At first I thought you disliked me, as most people do. I generally find that I meet with shrinking, and it never surprises me, it is the kindness that is surprising. I suppose Laurie has told you something about me, has he?”

“Yes,” she faltered, “a little—about your great misfortune when you were a boy.”

“That was the first—and the greatest. One utterly unbearable part of it was the way my mother took it. I don’t blame her, mind, it was natural, I dare say, loving Ralph as she did, and never having been fond of me, but she has done no-

thing but hate me since. I could not help feeling her unjust, for I inherit a great deal from her. I don’t want to say much about my mother, but to make you understand things I must say a little. She is a most peculiar woman—she has never made those she cared for happy, and always those she hated miserable. She has had passionate hatreds as well as a few passionate loves. We are very much alike, and she always hated me. I must not blame her, she has had dreadful misfortunes in her life—we are a doomed race. My father, who seemed one of the most careless, hearty, jovial of men, had a sudden and acute attack of mania; he took a violent dislike to his wife, tried to kill her, and succeeded in killing himself. I—I was a little fellow seven years old—I saw him die,” he paused shuddering, and said no more for a moment. “No wonder,” he went on after a moment, “no wonder I was different from other people after that. But if that had been all I could have borne it, have got used to my own morbid sensations, and have learned to keep them under, but infinitely worse followed. The fate that was on me was that my influence should blight other lives; that, while entirely innocent of any desire to do harm, I should not be able to prevent myself from doing it. Laurie is the only friend I ever had who has seemed proof against this curse. First my twin brother, whom I worshipped, then a chum at school—no, two—then the faithful black servant I had in Africa, then a man I made friends with in India: the first was mauled by a lion, throwing himself between it and me; the second was thrown and killed by a horse I lent him. Six lives, more or less directly, have been sacrificed! I have tried isolating myself; I have gone from place to place, chiefly alone, but it is difficult to cut oneself off from people.

“You—you understand now why I am going away? why I won’t be dear old Laurie’s best man? I’d kill myself if I brought any harm on his honest head. Perhaps you wonder that I haven’t ever killed myself.” Madge uttered an exclamation of horror, both at his words and the cold and passionless way in which he uttered them. “Yes,” he said, “I’ve often thought of it. I don’t think it was exactly cowardice that prevented me, but it never seemed quite right.”

Madge clasped her hands hard together. Some feeling, the strongest and least selfish she had ever known, forced her into vehement and ardent words.

"It is terrible, terrible! I can't say what it makes me feel—so sorry, so unspeakably sorry for you! But I don't believe, I won't believe that so dreadful a fate will go on pursuing you. Things change, times change—we all of us have our bad times and our good. Your good ones must be to come!" He shook his head in silence. "Don't!" she cried more vehemently still, "don't refuse comfort. Don't shut happiness out of your life for a morbid idea. You say you have never brought any harm to Laurie, other people too may care for you and help you to be happy—some woman. Oh, you cannot be alone all your life!"

She suddenly burst into a passionate storm of tears, her warm, genial, and Sybarite nature was deeply shaken and disturbed by the impression of his utterly hopeless despair.

He knelt down by her and took her hands, timidly trying to stop the current of her tears with imploring entreaties to her not to care, not to let his unhappiness affect her.

"Oh, I'm not so selfish as you think—though I am selfish," she sobbed, and in her abandonment of her half-hysterical mood she laid her face against his shoulder. He shrank and quivered.

"Miss Lifford! Madge! For heaven's sake—I can't bear it—you tempt me too much," he muttered in a hoarse, strained voice. "I know it's only pity, divine pity, but you'll force me to say what I never must—what no woman shall ever hear me say."

"Say it, say it!" she whispered at his ear.

Something beyond her own control seemed urging her, she felt on the point of being ready to give up her will, to declare that he must not leave her, that she was the woman who must conquer his evil star!

"No, no," he cried almost fiercely, "not for a million worlds! I've sworn I never would. I'm not such a wretch! Madge, dear, dear Madge, let me say good-bye for ever. Let me go before it is too late!"

She drew away from him suddenly.

"Well, go, then, go, if you can," she said bitterly, dashing the tears from her face. "I keep no man against his will."

He rose slowly to his feet, yet he lingered, looking at her with longing wistfulness.

"You don't understand what it means to me," he said. "It's tearing something

out of my heart. If I stayed only a little longer I could never find the strength to go, and go I must. I swore once before heaven, that my life should never touch a woman's. It's just because I care too much that I must let you think I don't care at all; just because I—because I am afraid of loving you better than honour, better than faith, better than knowledge. I could only do you harm, it is not given to me to do good to any living being."

"And yesterday you saved my life!"

"Ab, yes. I must be glad of that! I thought I had killed you. I saved you, dear, for a happy fate, for a happy man. Sometimes I think I have a sort of second sight. I know there's brightness to come for you, and love and hope. And just because you were destined for that I'll never meddle with and spoil your life, my dear. Good-bye, good-bye! Don't fret about me, don't think about me any more if you can help, only never believe that I didn't care for your happiness more than my own! Good-bye."

He stooped to take both her hands, meaning to kiss them again, but the same strange and wayward impulse that had swayed her all through their curious interview made her lift her face to meet his lips. After all he was human; he could not but kiss her passionately. When he was gone she hid her burning, tear-stained face in the pillow, ashamed to meet the light of day. She had never done the wooing before, and it had been rejected!

"But it isn't that he doesn't care," she told herself, "he loves me and that is why he goes away. Oh, my poor, poor Jim, you should have let me see if I could not have changed your fate!"

Laurie received a magnificent present from his friend in a few days, from London, with a short note of farewell. Jim L'Estrange was starting for New Zealand in a week's time. Laurie loudly lamented and abused his friend for his wandering propensities, but Madge made no remark. She was well again; but every one thought her spirits subdued, and her nerves shaken. It was some while before time worked its usual cure and she was her usual lively self. She never mentioned Jim L'Estrange's name, but whenever Laurie got a brief, occasional letter from him she listened with curious intentness to the meagre details which were all she could collect.

It was some years after that, and Madge

had been married what seemed to her a considerable time, when one evening at dinner her husband casually mentioned that he had met Laurie in town, and he had told him an old friend of his had gone down in a homeward-bound vessel from New Zealand, in sight of land.

"What was his name?" Madge asked quickly, paling suddenly.

"L'Estrange. Why, Madge, did you know him? Was he too one of the old flames?"

"Don't, Charlie," Madge said with a trembling lip, "he was the most unhappy man I ever knew, and I was sure he would end like that—I am sure he would say that it was the best thing that could happen to him. Don't ask me any more about him, and let us talk of something else. I don't want to cry, and indeed it's nothing to be sorry for. He did not know what it meant to be happy."

She started away from the subject and feverishly rushed into another. Her husband looked at her a little curiously but asked her no questions. She woke in the night, crying out from a dreadful dream in which she had felt the cold grasp of Jim L'Estrange's dead hands, and seen those fatal eyes of his stare at her from his drowned and ghastly face.

But life was quick to console her, and after all his outcast wanderings the wanderer slept sound.

SOME ALGERIAN CUSTOMS.

AN acquaintance with the Koran and its doctrines teaches us something about the Arabs of Algeria, who, in spite of thirty years of French influence, are still good Moslems, and much addicted to the traditions and beliefs of their forefathers. The few following precepts from the holy book are therefore given, because they have a certain value as portraiture as well as being interesting in themselves.

"When you seek a favour, apply yourself to the person who has the most com-
plaisant look."

"He who first gives a salutation is free from pride."

"God hates disorder and uncleanness."

"When a person falls into a rage, let him be silent."

"When a person standing up becomes angry, let him sit down, and if he is still angry, let him laugh."

"God hates the man who has a proud look in the presence of his companions."

"When a man sneezes, his companions must congratulate him; but if he sneezes thrice, there is no need to do so, since he is then supposed to have a cold in the head."

"When a man is ill for three days he is relieved of all his sins, and becomes again as pure as when his mother gave him birth."

"When a fly falls into your cup you must submerge it altogether, and then take it out; because in the one of its wings there is a disease, and in the other the cure for it."

The above, some of which are as sensible as others are eccentric, are fairly typical of the mass of personal and general instruction which the Koran offers to good Mohammedans. They will not stand the severe rational tests we of the North would apply to them, but they serve the superstitious and ignorant Arabs very well. The tourist who travels third class in Algeria and finds himself perforce in the society of three or four rather formidable-looking Kabyles in dirty old gowns from their heads to their bare knees, may wonder at the unanimity with which they give him "good morning," but if he understands the Koran he may see sufficient reason for it. He will not then, however, have an inordinately high opinion of himself on the strength of the greeting. For he will know well that, though outwardly civil to him, the worthy fellows really desire anything rather than his company. Nor will he find much comfort in the Algerian proverb which says that the Arabs wear their tunics long in order that, when they approach Paradise, a certain number of the more excellent Christians may enter with them by hanging on to their skirts.

But after a few days' sojourn in Algeria it is impossible not to convict the natives of disregard of the Koran in matters of cleanliness. I have travelled on the main Algerian line of railway with Kabyles over whose garments the procession of unnameable vermin has been constant for an hour—a procession troubled only by the erratic skipping into its midst of other vermin, less obnoxious indeed, but still calculated to make a scrupulous European feel uneasy. Perhaps the men themselves had washed in cold water that morning. But of what account was that if they were content after their ablutions to cover themselves with filthy rags, the mere sight of which provoked the beginnings of nausea?

Not that the Arabs profess to be indifferent to the vermin, like certain Spaniards, Italians, and Greeks. They have divers remarkable recipes for their extermination. Here is one of them. "To get rid of fleas, you must take a palm leaf, rub it with unsalted mutton fat and then stick it in the wall. Afterwards repeat a prayer three or seven times. Meanwhile the fleas will have run to the stick. All you have then to do is to burn this when you think you have secured a sufficient number of them."

Perhaps this remedy may be applied for home use. If it serves the Arabs it may be good for us also. Upon the whole, however, it is but little more sensible than the Algerian cure for a headache. "Do as the Prophet did and take," says the doctor, "some cat's flesh and pound it with milk and butter. A pinch of this in the nostrils gives immediate relief."

To the Arabs a bad smell is an invisible demon, either male or female, and when a true believer is met by one it is his duty to pray for help against the enemy. Notwithstanding this doctrine, however, a European does not find the back streets of Algiers or Constantine as sweet as they might be. In the latter place, especially, I have had to guard my nose for five minutes on end while in that amazing Gorge of the Rummel, the townward cliffs of which were streaked with the ooze of blood from slaughter-houses, foul garbage draping them like a curtain. Among the modern Algerians, touched by the transforming wand of civilisation, familiarity seems to have bred contempt for this class of demon.

The older Kabyles of the mountains, as may be supposed, think but lightly of their present condition in contrast with their earlier independence, when they could act as they pleased without incurring an undue liability for their deeds. "In the good old times," one of them remarked lamentingly not long ago, "when we were free, every one was his own master. The brave man feared nobody; he killed his enemy without pity—and also without remorse. A man's life was of no more account than a fly's."

Of course it is different now. The French intruders have their barracks here, there, and everywhere, and their martial red legs are bound to show where one village of Kabyles has opened up a mortal feud with another village. Like enough the warriors of civilisation are glad of the pretext to do a little, or more than a little,

extermination—for the good of the great cause of enlightened humanity.

Not that civilisation has even yet made much impression on these gentry. They still live in wigwams of boughs, covered over with a patchwork of rag—in which you may perchance behold a Parisian pair of discarded trousers rudely incorporated—and they herd together in the smoky and flea-infested interior like cattle in a stall, or rather pigs in a pen. The Koran's injunctions for the repression of anger do not strike them as worthy of acceptance. In fact, they are as keen in vendetta as the Corsican. A murder has to be atoned for by a murder. The man who refuses to exact blood for the blood of his relatives is pointed at as a coward. Among certain of them the procedure is as follows. As soon as a murder is committed, the relatives of the murderer hasten to the relatives of the victim and demand pardon, at the same time offering the price of blood—about two hundred and fifty francs, or ten pounds. This money is set aside in a cow's horn, put in the corner of the dwelling, and kept there until a member of the murdered man's family has avenged him. It is then returned to the relatives of the first murderer, and the account is considered squared. The saying, "Such a one has his horn full," implies that the family indicated is on the look out for a chance of assassinating a member of a certain other family.

A social understanding of this kind cannot be thought highly of. Its barbarity and unfairness are evident. The ways of civilisation under the like circumstances must be held far wiser.

The Algerian Arabs, and especially the Kabyles, do not esteem women very much. When a child is born in one of the towns, if it is a boy the women folk shout two or three times in the street with all their might; but if it is a girl they shout only once. The common sayings about matrimony are somewhat contradictory, as may be imagined in so speculative an enterprise. "It is joy for a moment and sorrow for a lifetime." The Marabout Sidi Ali bou Rhama being consulted by a man if he ought to marry, replied: "Matrimony is like a besieged fortress; those who are outside it want to get in, those who are inside want to get out." The latter saying is often engraved on an amulet worn by the Arabs, though to European intelligence its value appears indeterminate.

On the other hand, women are admitted

as members of some of the secret societies or semi-religious confraternities which abound in Algeria, and which have a political force hardly conceivable by us. It is from these societies that the leaven of hatred against the French conquerors diffuses itself steadily throughout the native community. They have already brought about two or three revolts. It is not at all unlikely that they may organize and start many more ere they are crushed into insignificance.

Here is another legend on the subject of matrimony. "When a man marries the devil utters a terrible wail. 'What is the matter with your lordship?' asks his imp, who hasten towards him at his cry. 'A mortal has just escaped me,' Satan replies despairingly."

This ought to be balm to the souls wounded by the preceding depreciatory comments.

Of course there is little courtship, as we understand it, among the Algerian Arabs. In the towns a middleman is necessary for marriages, as for the distribution of tea, sugar, and tobacco. He goes from house to house inspecting the marriageable girls, and then carries his reports of their beauty or other qualifications to the parents of the marriageable young men. The matter thus resolves itself into one of arrangement between the parents of the respective parties, the chief question being the amount of the girl's dowry. A present of fritters and honey-cakes from the bridegroom to the bride is a sign that the preliminaries are settled, and that the marriage will duly take place. If the young man is wealthy he adds to the fritters and confectionery, cosmetics, henna, and other materials for the enhancement of the young woman's physical charms.

During the five or six days previous to the marriage the girl is subjected to a course of washing, shampooing, and general decoration, that can hardly fail when the time comes to make her a very presentable object. On the wedding day, in the evening, the parents on both sides entertain their respective friends at a great feast. The bride, as may be supposed, is the chief attraction to those in her father's house. She is viewed and complimented on her appearance, and afterwards the guests form a procession—the men in front and the women behind—and march through the streets towards the house of the bridegroom, to the sound of musical instruments. The women, including the

bride, are all scrupulously veiled, and each carries a lighted candle. The young man has by this time finished eating, and in accordance with his duty, has seated himself on the cushions in the nuptial chamber. Hither the relations and friends of the bride conduct the girl. They take off her cloak, turn up her sleeves to the elbow, leaving her bare, henna-stained forearms exposed to view, set her hands akimbo in her sides, and throw a light veil over her. In this attitude she is led to the bridegroom, to the accompaniment of more tambour music. He opens the door, takes her by the hand, and, having shut the door, makes her sit by him on the cushions; after which he lifts her veil, and for the first time looks upon his wife's face. The lady says not a word to her husband until he has made her a present, either of jewellery or gold pieces.

The next day there is a great deal of fritter-making in the new establishment, for distribution among the various friends and relations on both sides.

The ceremony among the Kabyles is more interesting because of its comparative resemblance to the customs of the old Greeks and Romans, and even to those which still prevail in sequestered parts of France. Here it is the girl's father who exacts a wedding portion, a sum about eight pounds, for which the bridegroom has generally to rely upon the advances of his friends. Often, too, the young man has not a house for his bride, in which case his friends set to work and build one—no very difficult matter. On the wedding day the bride is led through the villages in the neighbourhood, mounted on a mule, and escorted by friends and relations, who shout and fire guns again and again. The various householders hasten forth to offer her a sieve full of beans, nuts, or dried figs. Of these she takes a handful, which she kisses and then replaces in the sieve. All the offerings are collected in sacks by the old women of the procession, as contributions to the young people's larder. At the bridegroom's house the girl's hands are washed with liquid butter. Then they give her some fresh eggs, which she breaks on the mule's head and inside the unhappy animal's ears; thereby it is believed counteracting any evil designs against her and her husband's happiness. Before entering the house she drinks milk, fresh and sour, and also water, and scatters over her shoulder a handful of barley, wheat, and salt, for the good of the family. The husband

then approaches her and fires a pistol above her head to signify that thenceforward he has the power of life and death over her. Not infrequently he makes the symbol even more emphatic by firing into her head and setting her aflame. This done, little remains except for the youth to lift the lady in his arms and carry her bodily into his house.

The Algerian Arabs inter their dead almost as soon as the breath has left their bodies. They have good authority for this in Holy Writ. "Hasten to bury your dead, in order that, if they are virtuous, they may the more quickly enjoy eternal happiness, and if they have died in sin you may the sooner get quit of creatures condemned to hell fire."

When a person is at the point of death, friends assemble about the sick-bed; men only if the dying person is a man, and women only in the other case. The Prophet is invoked repeatedly on the dying one's behalf. These prayers cease immediately the person is dead. The body is then at once stretched on the floor and washed with soap and water—or with sand, if water be wanting. Camphor and such perfumes as musk, amber and sweet herbs are then disposed about the body, which is afterwards wrapped in a long shroud knotted above the head and below the feet. The corpse is thus wholly enveloped. A powder of the dry leaves of the wild jujube and henna may be used as a substitute for the more costly materials.

All being ready for the funeral, the dead body is put upon a bier covered by a silken pall, and carried off at a brisk pace, head foremost, attended, if the deceased was rich, by three or four marabouts or holy Moslems, who repeatedly utter the name of "Allah" on the way.

The grave may be in a garden or a field. In the former case, from that time forward the fruit of the garden will be at the disposal of all the world.

Before burying the body the dead man's turban is cast twice upon the ground, with an adjuration of the Prophet Mahomet. Everything in connection with it is managed with extreme care, for it is a grave sin to cause any suffering to the dead. Bread and figs are distributed to the poor who attend the funeral, and it is clearly to the profit of the dead man to have a large following of paupers, since each seed of the figs distributed assures him a year of pardon for his sins.

With the rich it is not unusual to set

up a tent over the grave. Herein a marabout spends a week, praying night and day for the deceased. This cannot be altogether a desirable office for the Moslem priest, because it is usual to have an opening at the head of the grave, ostensibly to allow the dead man to hear the sobs of those who come to pay him the tribute of their prayers and regrets. Before the French occupied Algeria shallow burying was customary. This led to much that was unpleasant, and aided the jackals and other wild beasts in their investigations. But it is now forbidden to bury in a grave less than four and a half feet deep. Nevertheless, seeing that it is believed if, after the lapse of a certain time, the dead man's shroud comes to the surface of the soil, it is a sign that Allah has welcomed him as a worthy man, one may suppose as much as possible is still done to aid the jackals in their natural quests, and to defeat the sanitary injunctions of the authorities.

On the day after the burial the friends and relatives come to pray at the grave. When they leave, the women-folk take their place, and sit passing little white pebbles from one hand to the other, repeating one of the many religious ejaculations of the Moslem ritual. They do this for three days in succession, and then leave the stones on the grave.

A curious and pathetic superstition deserves to be mentioned. It is commonly believed that the souls of the dead come out of the graves to associate with those who attend to pay respect to their memory. The souls of adults seat themselves upon the little footstones of the graves, while those of children perch upon the shoulders of their mothers, or sisters, or grandmothers, who may be present. A woman upon leaving the grave moves very gently, lest she should hurt the little soul upon her by suddenly disturbing its equilibrium or swinging it against anything.

The Kabyles more noisy in all their affairs, raise a tumult round their dead. Men and women assemble in the courtyard of the deceased, and wall and beat plates of iron and copper as an accompaniment to their lamentations. This riot sets the dogs of the village howling and the cattle lowing. The dead man lies in his room, with lighted candles round about him, and accepts these tokens of his worth. Professional mourners of both sexes also come to do him honour. They disfigure themselves with mud and mire, being already

sufficiently disreputable in their diurnal rage, and, further, draw blood from their cheeks and foreheads with their nails.

The actual interment takes place with a certain amount of picturesque detail. The dead body is set upon a mule, in front of the rider. The followers are also mounted, and proceed in silence to the cemetery. The next day the deceased's horse, in holiday attire, is led into the public place of the village, and the villagers form a ring round it, moving slowly in a rotatory fashion, and pausing at intervals, while a local bard sings the virtues of the dead man. After each verse the funeral dance is resumed to the chant of a chorus, of which the following is a specimen :

No—he is not dead !
His soul is with God.
We shall see him one day,
No, he is not dead !

Here again we have an instance of the similarity between the customs of the Corsicans and the Kabyles. Another thing. The "ballo tondo" or national dance of Sardinia, is much the same as this requiem of the Algerian mountaineers. The Sardes are a very lugubrious people, but it is certainly odd that their merry-making and the death ceremonies of the Kabyles should be, as they are, so much akin. In the eleventh century the Arabs did as they pleased with Sardinia; killed its people, reaped their grain, and settled in the land by thousands. This seems to be respectable testimony on behalf of the antiquity of the present—though fading—customs of the Kabyles; also to the singularly dolorous temperament of the people who were the offspring of the cross between Arab and Sarde parents.

MISS GARTH.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT night Dalgarno made himself agreeable in a less obnoxious sort of way. He sang several songs after dinner in a very fair tenor voice, and his manners had decidedly improved. One or two of the guests were ready to vote him not such a bad sort of fellow after all. He talked freely too about his travels. There appeared to be very few countries which he had not visited.

Jocelyn sat aloof, and wondered how soon the sword would fall. Godfrey watched also, and racked his brains to

think of some way out of the difficulty for her.

It seemed to him that there was no chance of concealing this hateful marriage much longer. All the world must soon know that his beautiful Jocelyn was the legal property of the swarthy, handsome man who sang Italian songs and wore showy jewellery, and whose insolence was only kept within bounds by certain considerations for his own personal welfare.

Of course Jocelyn could allow him an income; but that would not do away with the one awful fact that he was her husband. That he was a convicted felon entitled her to no divorce. They two—the fair, proud mistress of Boraston Hall, and the vulgar, scheming forger—would be man and wife to the end of time.

He did not speak to Jocelyn that night, but he was always hovering near her, conscious of her least movement, ready to serve and help her. But Dalgarno, when he did address Miss Garth, did so in a perfectly respectful manner, and there was no need for Godfrey to listen to every word he said.

Lady Carstairs asked again for Aveline.

"I am not going to allow her in the drawing-room again until every one has gone, aunt," answered Jocelyn quietly. "She gets so excited."

"I am sure I think you are quite right, my dear, only it is such a very unusual thing for you to do! I have advised Aveline's being kept in the background for years, and you always allowed her to do as she liked.

"I must have seen the error of my ways, Aunt Grace."

"I am very glad. I never thought you would. Such a fuss as you always make of the child! She might be your own for the care you take of her."

Jocelyn's face remained unmoved, but Godfrey Wharton, who was standing near, turned away his head to hide the purple flush of jealousy that had crept into his cheeks again.

"Now, at the ball to-morrow," continued Lady Carstairs, fanning herself, "what are you going to do with this Dagioni man? You cannot introduce him to all your guests."

"I suppose Mr. Dalgarno can take care of himself as well as anybody else."

"Oh, better I should say. He has a fund of assured impudence, which might be entertaining if it were not so abominably vulgar. What I mean is that I should

not care to see him dancing with Rose or Lucy for instance."

"It is quite simple for you to tell Rose and Lucy that they are not to dance with him."

"It depends whether he is tipsy or not, my dear. It won't be at all simple if he is—which he certainly was last night. Only think how unpleasant, Jocelyn, for one of my daughters to be mixed up in a drunken brawl!"

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Why, send him off by the first train to-morrow morning, of course. Tell him that you find you haven't a room to spare, and that you will be delighted to see him some other time."

Jocelyn's pale lips curved into a smile.

"I am afraid that is hardly practicable. Rose and Lucy must use their own wits to avoid dancing with him."

"Really, Jocelyn, you are very obstinate—and—unpleasant," said Lady Carstairs with ladylike annoyance. "What the Countess will think of your new guest, I don't know!"

Dalgarno at that moment was trilling an Italian song out of a comic opera, and performing wonders in the way of runs and shakes. Lady Carstairs decided that he had been on the stage.

"It is a most mysterious thing," she persisted, "that you who are so fastidious should be so completely in the power of that mountebank. You never confide in me, Jocelyn, but I cannot help suspecting that the wretch is in love with you."

Again Jocelyn smiled.

"And I with him? Quite wrong, my dear aunt. How wrong, time will show!"

She moved away, and talked to her various guests for the rest of the evening. It was not till the morning of the next day that she had her momentous interview with Dalgarno.

The frost had broken; a complete thaw had set in. The roads were in a melting, slushy condition, and the ice on the home ponds no longer really secure. There was much grumbling about the weather, and the more daring of the guests suggested a skating expedition in spite of it.

"Pray don't think of it," said Lady Carstairs, anxiously; "you might all be brought home dripping and half-drowned. I never can see the joke of trying how nearly one can get killed. It is much simpler to fall down in front of a carriage and pair, than to see how near you can go to a rotten piece of ice."

So it was decided that the party was to amuse itself indoors, and not be brought home in a damp condition to spoil Jocelyn's furniture.

Dalgarno was summoned to Jocelyn's own boudoir by Jocelyn's own maid, a discreet elderly person who knew when to be silent.

He entered the room with his most swaggering air. Jocelyn was sitting gazing into the fire. She seemed to him to be particularly fair and girlish-looking, and a slight throb of the old forgotten love that he had once felt for her thrilled his heart once more.

"You're looking a sight prettier than when I left you seven years ago, Jocelyn," he remarked.

"Please don't trouble about my looks. They can be nothing to you now—if they ever were. I did not ask you to come here to pay me compliments."

He sat down on a sofa covered with exquisite brocade, and stretched out his legs to the fire luxuriously.

"Don't be so confoundedly stiff, Jocelyn. There is no reason why we shouldn't let bygones be bygones and settle down together comfortably, Darby and Joan fashion."

"You can dismiss that idea once for all. I would rather kill myself at once than spend my life with you."

"'Till death do us part,'" quoted Dalgarno in drawling tones. "You used to have a conscience, Jocelyn. I was never a bad husband to you. I don't know why you cut up so rough, now I've come back."

She did not answer him for a few moments. Then she said abruptly:

"I will give you a thousand a year if you will leave this house to-day and never come back to it."

He laughed derisively.

"I should be a fool to do that. You can't turn me out, and I mean to stay and share your ten thousand a year instead of going away like a whipped cur. By Jove! I wonder you dare to propose it."

"You will certainly never live at Boraston Hall."

"I certainly shall, my dear Jocelyn," said Dalgarno, getting up and walking to the mantelpiece, where he stood eyeing her curiously. "What is there to prevent me?"

"The law. You cannot force me to live with you."

"Probably not. But I mean to share your roof at any rate."

She clasped her hands with a speechless gesture of despair.

"I tell you you shall not! You cannot come here without my consent."

"I am quite aware of that. But I mean to gain it."

"How?"

He leaned towards her.

"Do you no longer love me, Jocelyn?" he asked in a low voice.

She shuddered away from him with a violent gesture of repulsion.

"I never loved you. I know it now."

"And you refuse to treat me as your husband? You refuse to allow me to live beneath the same roof with you?"

"I do! A thousand times I do!"

Dalgarno fixed his evil eyes on the fair flushed face.

"Very well," he remarked. "You have made your choice, and you can abide by it—if you like. Only, in the event of your doing so I shall take my child away from here to-morrow."

There was a deathly silence in the room, Jocelyn's flushed face had turned white. She made a piteous gesture with her hands—a gesture of the denial that her lips were too dry to utter.

Dalgarno went on with a slight smile:

"I was straying through the house yesterday—you will pardon a husband's natural curiosity, I am sure—and I came across a couple of charming, really charming rooms, evidently fitted up for a child. One was a dainty sitting-room—you have quite unexceptionable taste, Jocelyn, I must say—and there was a dear little fairy kneeling on the hearthrug, building a house of cards. Needless to say, the house of cards fell to the ground on my entrance. I asked the fairy her name, and she said 'Aveline.' That was your mother's name, by the way, Jocelyn. It was stupid of you to call her that. It lets the cat out of the bag at once. She also told me that she loved you very much, and that she was never allowed to come to the drawing-room now. I sympathised with her about the last fact, and promised her that it should soon be remedied. She is as like you as two peas, my dear girl. Of course, I was delighted to find that I was the unconscious father of the little fairy. She will be seven years old to-morrow," added Dalgarno, his cruel gaze still on his victim's face, "and when a child is seven years old, her father is allowed to take possession of her, you know. When I leave Boraston Hall, Aveline goes too."

Again there was the tense silence. It seemed a century to Jocelyn before he went on speaking.

"Now let me advise you to be sensible, Jocelyn. I will give you a week to decide in, and I will hold my tongue for that length of time. There is really no reason, you know, why you shouldn't acknowledge our marriage. I wasn't arrested under my own name, and nobody need know why I was unfortunately compelled to leave my charming wife for seven years. We shall get on together very well, I have no doubt. I shan't worry you at all, but I mean to live up the old place a little."

Jocelyn spoke for the first time, but in tones so hoarse that he scarcely heard them.

"Have you no pity? Do you not see how I am suffering? Take what money you please, but leave me the child."

"That is not my object at all. I am not so mercenary as all that. I pine for domestic bliss. It will delight me to hear that little fairy address me as father."

Jocelyn could bear no more. She rose hurriedly, clinging to a chair with one hand for support.

"Adolphe!" she exclaimed, "by the love you once bore me—if, indeed, you ever did love me—spare me, pity me, and leave me my child."

"Do not be melodramatic, my dear. I do not intend to separate you from your child. I merely claim to form part of the family circle."

"Oh, why did I ever meet—ever marry you?" she exclaimed, looking at him with eyes dilated with horror.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Because you were in love with me, I suppose. You had every appearance of being so. Fate decides these things, Jocelyn, and it has decided pretty well for me. Fortune has played me many a disagreeable trick, but she has made up everything to me now."

He sauntered towards the door.

"I had better not stop too long, perhaps. That ferret-eyed old aunt of yours might find out our tête-à-tête, and ask all sorts of questions about it. She really is a most unpleasant person."

He left the room, and Jocelyn stood there as though turned to stone.

The secret—the secret she would have guarded with her life—was out now. It was in the possession of the man who could put his knowledge to such cruel uses. She had seen from the first that it

would have been worse than useless to deny that Aveline was her child. She herself had seen day by day with growing terror that her little daughter was very, very like herself.

It seemed to her that there was nothing to be done now. A future with Dalgarno in it was not to be thought of. She shuddered at the bare idea. A future without Aveline was impossible. Was she really to choose between these two fates—almost equally terrible in her eyes?

She remembered that it was the ball that night, and that she must not appear at it pale and heavy-eyed. She must be bright and gay once more, and play her part bravely, so that no one should guess that she was bearing about with her a hideous secret.

Jocelyn moved about as in a dream after that interview with Dalgarno. She walked, and talked, and smiled, and ate and drank as usual, but all the while a strange sense of unreality hung about her like a persistent, haunting nightmare—a nightmare not to be shaken off.

As she stood in her own room putting the finishing touches to her costume for the ball that night, she marvelled at her own calmness. In certain crises of life the mind seems to stand still and watch its own agonies with a strange callousness and inertness. Jocelyn's cheeks were bright, her eyes were deep and tranquil, her lips smiling. So the heroines of the French Revolution went to the guillotine with a jest upon their lips, and serenity on their brows.

Jocelyn was down first in the great hall, which had been cleared for dancing as well as the real ball-room. She stood before the fire buttoning her long white glove, and longing feverishly for the guests to come and force her to take her thoughts away from the evil face which had looked on her anguish with such cruel indifference.

It was Godfrey Wharton who came down the stairs and found her there alone. He had not spoken to her since the previous day. He hardly seemed to know what to say to her now. He stood looking at her in silence. At last:

"I have been thinking about what you

told me," he said slowly and with a great effort. "There seems to be no real reason for uneasiness. The—man will demand a high price for going away quietly I suppose? But no doubt you are prepared to give it."

"I would give all I have, but circumstances have made such an arrangement impossible."

"He must be made to listen to reason."

She smiled—a strange mocking smile that seemed to chill him.

"He does not need money. He longs for affection," she said, with a horrible lightness. "He wants a pleasant family life. He already loves his child."

Godfrey Wharton fell back a step.

"He has found out that?"

"It appears so. Think of Aveline calling him father! Is there not a delightful prospect of domestic happiness in the future?"

She was standing very erect, and her eyes glittered with excitement.

"Jocelyn!" he implored, his hand on her arm, "for God's sake take care! You will break down."

"If I had been going to do that I should have done it already. I feel a delightful sense of security, as if nothing could hurt me or move me any more! Break down indeed! You shall see how many dances I dance to-night. Hark, that is the first carriage driving up! I wish they would all come soon. I feel as if I should like to dance for ever."

She held out her programme to him.

"There," she said, "take as many as you want. Our step suits to perfection, and, perhaps, this is the last night I shall ever be Miss Garth. By to-morrow the world may know me as——"

She checked herself. The look in his eyes seemed to bewilder her. She put her hand to her head for a moment.

"Why do you look so sorry?" she said under her breath. "It is not worth while. Nothing matters very much. And life is not an eternity after all. Do not look like that for my sake. I want to be merry to-night."

And, leaving the little scented card in his hands, she went forward to welcome her guests.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER X. MAKING A SENSATION.

LADY ROOKWOOD'S ball was one of the most fashionable and best conducted entertainments, though she and her husband had nothing to do with the very fast section of the aristocracy. Lord Rookwood was said to be led by his wife, but it would appear that she led him well. She liked celebrities, and through the Farrants Lady Rookwood had heard of the Winskells, and she had determined to see for herself whether the reported beauty of the Princess were true. Hence the call and the invitation. The Rookwoods were much attached to their cousins the Bethunes, and Forster, having found out that Philip had come to forward his sister's début, had procured invitations for Clytie and her brother.

Clytie Gillbanks had been educated in Brighton and Paris, and she had just returned from the latter city. She was very handsome, and very unlike her brother, and now she had dragged a shy, delicate aunt to town, and had insisted on Philip's coming with them and using his influence with his college friend to procure her an entrance into society. Clytie knew that money ought to unlock every door, so why should she not enjoy the great wealth her father had amassed by a fortunate invention, even if there were no blue blood in the veins of the Gillbanks? Her brother had always been allowed to do as he liked, and why should she not have her turn,

when nothing but courage and hard work were necessary for success?

Clytie was very dark, with dark eyes, black hair, and olive complexion. She and Philip had nothing in common, as he was incapable of being worldly, but on his side he was an affectionate brother, craving for a sympathy which Clytie could not give. She was her own centre, her own object in life, and the sudden increase of wealth had early crushed any higher qualities which hard work might have developed.

This evening she was very proud of her success, as she found herself distinctly sought after at the ball; she was too much occupied with her partners to notice the Bethunes, who had come late, and to whom Philip was longing to introduce her, as if the fact of knowing such unworldly people would counterbalance Clytie's natural tendencies.

Clytie had just secured an admiring young Lord Harvey, and was at the height of her happiness, when she became conscious of a counter attraction. Lord Harvey had twice stuck an eye-glass into his left eye to gaze at somebody.

"Ah, yes. By the way, do you know the lady Lord Rookwood has just danced with? I saw her come in. Awfully pretty girl! There is your brother speaking to her, so he must know her."

Soon after Philip came up to his sister with a radiant expression on his face.

"Clytie, isn't it strange? My Princess is here. You know the lady of the mysterious glen I wrote to you about? She is causing quite a sensation by her beauty."

"Oh," said Clytie, smiling a little scornfully; "that make-believe Princess. How ridiculous!"

"Make-believe! I heard Lord Rookwood himself introduce her as the Princess of Rothery. I assure you the Duke is in his element, and looks like one of the old French nobility, just as he did in that queer Palace."

"But these Winskells are not in the peerage, for I looked for them," returned Clytie, laughing. Her laugh was short and unnatural.

"But you can see for yourself that she is every inch a Princess. No, that big lady is hiding her."

Clytie's next partner claimed her.

Her brother now found himself near Miss Bethune, who said:

"Do tell me about this new beauty my cousin has found. They call her the Princess, and Forster says you know her."

Adela's partner was waiting for her, but she would hear Philip's answer.

"The family name is Winkell. A very old family in the north, I believe. For some splendid bravery an ancestor was called 'the King of Rothery,' and their titles have descended in the family. They live in a Palace, and I was entertained there last year when I lost my way in the mountains."

"How delightfully romantic! I must get Forster to admire her."

Philip Gillbanks was quite raised in general estimation, because he knew the beautiful stranger whom no other person present had ever seen before. Some one said she was a foreigner because some one else had said so. A few declared decidedly that they had never heard of the title, but they received as answer to this statement that it was a Dutch name. There were several noble Dutch families settled somewhere, who had come over with the Dutch William. Her uncle was the Duke of Greybarrow. The nationality did not matter, as they could both speak English. From that evening dated the question asked so often during that short season:

"Have you seen the Princess?"

Clytie Gillbanks lost the chance of being the reigning belle that evening, and she was secretly very much displeased. She put it down to Philip's fault. He always was so stupid, and never did anything for his own advantage or for the advancement of his family.

Philip, however, was, for his part, very happy. He had been so much taken by surprise that he had hardly dared to make himself known to Penelope. Only it hap-

pened that the Duke recognised him and approached him.

"I am very glad to meet you again, Mr. Gillbanks. You see I have brought my niece to show her what a London season is like. We have taken a house in Eaton Square. Come and speak to Penelope. I think your friend Mr. Bethune is here. You must introduce me. I knew his grandfather."

Philip followed the Duke, who found Penelope, near Mrs. Todd, surrounded by a group of men. He would have liked to find her alone, for he had often recalled her with surroundings very different from these. Now she was dressed in some beautiful material of pale blue. Her face—so like a picture of Mrs. Siddons, without any sign of weakness—was far more animated than he remembered it. She seemed almost farther off from him here than in the Palace, even with the formality with which she there had hedged herself round.

Penelope had soon learnt one lesson well—to hide the feelings of the moment. She even smiled at Philip, as if she were glad to see him.

"I hope you found your way safely out of our dale without further trouble?"

"Yes, but I often wished myself back again," said poor Philip, stumbling a little over the words. "If I might come and tell you the end of my experiences, I——"

Lord Harvey had managed to get an introduction, and now came to stop Philip's conversation.

"My uncle will be glad to see you," said Penelope, smiling; "do come."

She had learnt that society expects you to appear to welcome everybody.

She was gone, but Forster found his friend still looking after the favourite beauty.

"Forster, do you see her? Isn't she beautiful? You see everybody thinks so. It was not my imagination, as you suggested last year."

"What, the girl with the sham title? It's bad enough when people are forced to inherit their fathers' titles, but, if you need not do that, imagine adopting one! Which is she?"

"She is dressed in blue. There she is, dancing with Lord Harvey."

"Ah!" said Forster, surprised in spite of himself. "Well, she is not quite ordinary, certainly, and she does not look stupid. Has she any right ideas of making herself popular among her own people?"

"I don't know; they must admire and love her; but come along, I'll introduce you to her when that foolish fellow lets her alone."

A little later Forster was talking to Penelope and the Duke of Greybarrow. His perfect ease of manner, born of simplicity, and his quick, enthusiastic replies, made Penelope listen to him with pleasure. She thought she had never yet met a man who was so devoid of false ideas. He did not begin by paying her compliments, indeed she was a little surprised because he did not seem to be in the least conscious of her beauty.

"My friend Gillbanks has told me about his losing his way in your mountains. I sent him on that expedition, so I feel partly answerable for his blunders, but——"

"I have never reproached you," said Philip, smiling, his face showing that he was only too grateful for Forster's advice.

"Your grandfather was a friend of mine," said the Duke, turning to Forster; "he was of course my elder, but we youngsters thought him a very fine fellow."

"He was an inveterate gambler," said Forster, smiling, "so we have to thank him for depriving us of a good deal of surplus coin. Sometimes I wish he had acted differently."

"Yes, indeed," said Penelope, with a little sigh, "if one could force one's ancestors to——"

"Oh, I don't mind much; it was chiefly for other people. Our club could spend it easily; and there would be less need of so-called charity, which is hideous."

"That depends on how it is administered," put in Philip.

"Perhaps; anyhow, I seldom find it well administered. I have a sort of room down in Wansley, one of the most populous of our London parishes, and there our members try cases every Saturday evening."

"Try cases?" asked Penelope, looking with pleasure at the face before her. She understood now why Mr. Gillbanks had quoted his friend. He possessed in a very strange degree the power of attracting others, without being conscious of the fact.

"Yes, any poor man may come and plead his cause, showing reason why he is poor and where the fault has been. They usually put it down to the aristocracy, but the selected members of the club are

very keen questioners. It really is an education to hear these cases tried, but ladies are not admitted, and they would hardly appreciate the atmosphere."

Forster's voice was very musical, his enthusiasm was expressed in no unpleasant manner.

"I heard you had very strange ideas," said Penelope. "Do you really appreciate all—those people? Don't you think our lives should be passed among our own equals?"

"My niece is a thorough-going Conservative," said the Duke, smiling.

"Many women are till they see with their own eyes. Where's Adela? You should talk to her."

"Every person has his own special aim in life," said the Princess slowly, because she wished Forster to go on talking.

She did not notice that Philip kept his eyes on her, and that his face expressed supreme admiration.

"Often his own specially selfish aims," said Forster.

"I suppose every one understands that word differently," answered Penelope; but now the Princess was claimed by another distinguished guest. Lord Rookwood was making himself popular by freely introducing the new beauty.

"Come with me, Philip, I want you to talk to Adela about an expedition for the club. My cousin will lend me the grounds of her house at Richmond, I wish our place was not so far from town. My mother is getting sleepy—I am not surprised—so we shall not stay very long. Come and see us to-morrow and bring your sister with you."

Forster found that Philip, instead of being bored, was anxiously looking at the Princess, and was not angry with Clytie when she said that she must stay as late as possible.

Presently Forster, finding himself in a position from which he could see Miss Winkell, stopped a moment. His eyes rested on her slender neck and on her exquisitely shaped head; then he looked at Philip, thinking to himself:

"I dare say, that would be a good match for her, but Philip is too good for her, though evidently he admires her immensely. She is as proud as Lucifer, I expect, not the wife for such a splendid fellow. I'll try and keep him with me this week, and she will soon be overwhelmed by all this society whirl. Luckless girl, but she will like it."

CHAPTER XI. A GARDEN PARTY.

A WEEK after the ball Forster was suddenly announced to the Rookwoods whilst they were at breakfast. That day they happened to be alone.

His fine forehead; picturesque hair; large, sparkling eyes; clean, well-cut chin; and sensitive mouth, gave him somewhat the look of an actor, without an actor's unmistakeable self-consciousness. Forster Bethune was often noticed in a crowd, and it was, perhaps, his good looks which made him popular with people who abhorred his principles. Lord Rookwood, for instance, had no modern advanced ideas about labour and the working classes, but he seldom refused Forster's requests. He prided himself on a certain stability of mind which utterly prevented him from being led away by every new idea. If he ever discussed Forster's eccentricities, which he seldom did with patience, he would say: "Bethune is a very extraordinary fellow; clever, of course, but bitten by the most extravagant socialistic ideas. He hates his own class, and dabbles in philanthropy."

Forster had a supreme contempt for what was said of him, though personally he bore no ill will to the blasphemers. He would listen to the repeated hearsays of himself with a quaint smile on his lips, and the least little shrug of his broad shoulders; then, if he did not laugh outright, he usually plunged into some irrelevant subject in which he was just then specially interested.

"Rookwood, how late you are," he exclaimed, with a smile on his lips; "but it's lucky for me. How do you bear this hard work, Cousin Emily?"

"I am sure you want something or you would not favour us with a visit," said his cousin.

"Well, yes, I want to know if you will let me have your Richmond garden for a cabmen's social gathering. It's difficult to manage because the men are frightfully over-worked. Not the master cabmen, but those who work for the big men. It's abominable the number of hours they have to be on the road."

"My dear Forster, you say that of every one," said Lord Rookwood, smiling. "There isn't a trade that, according to you, isn't down-trodden. Work is a very good thing, and it's my opinion that the lower classes are ruining themselves and us by their idleness."

Forster frowned.

"Idleness! I wish you would do the day's work of some I know. But it isn't the work they complain of, only the want of it. We ought to be ashamed of it for them. If any of us idle fellows——"

"I'm not idle by any means! We are fast approaching the time when there will be no liberty, and when a man may not enjoy his own in peace, but only that which he can manage to take from his neighbour. What good will be gained to the populace when charity is dead, killed by robbers?"

"Rookwood, you don't understand; you just repeat the jargon of the upper classes. It isn't your fault, they all do it, but I wish you would come and spend a week at our club."

"Pshaw! Come and spend a week at one of my labourers' cottages at Hawkes, and see if you have anything to complain of."

"I complain of your having three estates, you know, Rookwood. A man can't enjoy more than a certain amount of land or money, after that all surplus merely adds to his cares. We shall have to come to some arrangement some day and then——"

"Pure moonshine all that talk—but about our grounds! Pray how many cabs are to be driven through the gardens?"

"Oh, Jack dear," put in his wife, "of course Forster means well, and Richards will see that no damage is done."

"And he will expect an immediate increase in his wages for entertaining roughs. These gardens are a beastly expense as it is."

"And you are there about six weeks in the year," said Forster with the bright smile, which always charmed Lady Rookwood in spite of herself, and annoyed his lordship because he knew he could not withstand it long.

"Come, Jack, you know it's no use quarrelling with Forster. You may as well write a note to Richards for him, and if any damage is done——"

"You'll let them have some flowers," put in Forster, "won't you? The wives, I mean, like flowers. You see, half the time your flowers are merely grown to delight Richards's eyes, and these people value even a faded geranium immensely."

"I don't pay gardener's wages for your cab-drivers' benefits, Forster. By the way, have you heard that there is likely to be a dissolution?"

"Oh, please don't begin to talk of politics," said Lady Rookwood; "you will fight

even more over them than you do over the cabmen! Forster won't take any side, so you get no chance of crowing over him, which seems half the fun you get out of politics. Do tell me, Forster, have you seen anything more of the beautiful and mysterious Princess? She made such a sensation at the ball, and I hear she is asked everywhere. That uncle of hers is a very clever and delightful man."

Forster's face brightened up.

"Yes, indeed, I have seen a good deal of her. My friend Gillbanks is there constantly. We have made her promise to come to Richmond, if you will allow your gardens to be——"

"Oh! then you have also gone in for her society, Forster," said Lady Rookwood laughing. "She is the rage. I hear that Lord Harvey is bent on marrying her, but evidently her Royal Highness is not soft-hearted."

"She is a very beautiful woman, and I believe she could be persuaded to devote herself to the work."

"Oh, nonsense, Forster, she is a very worldly young Princess, I believe. I hear it said that she means to make a great match."

"That's the horrid way you women talk of each other. Now, Cousin Emily, mayn't I invite you to your own gardens to join our select lady visitors? I assure you, you will enjoy our day immensely. We shall have a ball, and you can lead off——"

"With the chief cab-driver?"

"Yes! he would talk of it for the rest of his life. Miss Winskell will be quite at home on grass. Gillbanks says the family live in the wildest glen imaginable."

Lord Rookwood, having finished his kidneys, was feeling less irritable, especially as the talk had turned on pretty women.

"Well, Emily, why shouldn't we all go to Richmond that day if there is nothing better or worse to do? At all events, I should save the flower-beds from being stripped."

"I don't suppose you would be wanted," said Lady Rookwood smiling.

"Oh, yes, Rookwood, do come; you will be most useful explaining the foreign ferns and plants to our men."

"Thank you. Shall I be paid for working overtime? Well, yes, I think I will come for my own sake, though I hate this masquerading between the classes. You know both poor and rich are suspicious of each other."

"That's just it; but really it is only ignorance. There, I shall consider this a settled thing. We shall be a jolly party. Adela and Dora are coming. Mary has to take part in a symphony that day, though I tried to get her to fiddle for some dancing on your lawns."

"Poor Mary! She must have turned blue with indignation. Don't you know, Forster, that that sister of yours is considered one of the best amateur musicians in London?"

"Why should that prevent her playing simple dance music?"

"She thinks music is too divine to be dragged down to vulgar uses."

"Then Miss Winskell and Mrs. Todd, her companion, are coming, and Philip brings his sister."

"She is quite a typical 'nouvelle riche,' and gives herself no end of airs," said Lady Rookwood.

"But she is a fine woman," said her husband.

"I wish, Jack, you wouldn't talk of women as if they were all set out in a row for you to award them prizes for their beauty," answered Lady Rookwood, who was decidedly plain, though she was bright and clever.

"Well, I'm off," said Forster. "I'm going to meet Gillbanks, and to consult with him about provisions, now that we have the garden."

"You pauperise these people! Some day you'll be sorry for it," said his cousin.

"No, we don't. Our cabmen pay their expenses, and I know that in order to do it some of them will have to exercise much self-denial."

"Do you patronise the thieves, too?" said Lord Rookwood, not expecting the answer he got.

"The young ones, yes. Poor fellows, they have been very exemplary lately, but now and then they take their fling for the sake of the profession."

"Forster! you ought to be put in prison yourself. That's the only safe place for aristocrats of your sort."

"I hate the word; pray don't use it."

"How do you reconcile your conscience to the riches of your friend?" put in Lady Rookwood, laughing. "I hear that Mr. Gillbanks is extremely rich, and that he is considered a good match for penniless daughters. His sister will be sure to marry well for the same reason; but according to you, Forster, Mr. Gillbanks ought to have parted with all his money long ago."

"I don't keep Philip's conscience; besides, he has an idea that it is nobler to spend money well than to divest yourself of it. He is wrong, but some day I dare say——"

"Poor deluded disciple!" said Lord Rookwood. "Well, I am off to the club."

"You'll put down the engagement, Cousin Emily?"

"Put what down?"

"Our Richmond party. I'll see about boats for the men. Philip is paymaster that day, so you will see the princely style in which everything is done. Money is a useful commodity when it falls into such hands as his. Good-bye. I'll walk with Rookwood as far as his club."

Later on in the day, after the two friends had spent much time in organising their cabmen's party, Philip said hesitatingly:

"Let's come and see that the Princess has remembered her promise to us. You know she is now asked everywhere."

Forster assented. When with Miss Winkell he was himself conscious of being in the society of a woman of no ordinary character, and certainly of no ordinary beauty. He pictured her as being in the future one of the leaders of his reforms. His brain, teeming with ideas, was ever willing to imagine that all those he met would one day take part in his work; for up to this time he had never been in love except with his own half visionary ideas.

To-day, as he and Philip sauntered towards Eaton Square, he had no more idea of any special attraction than he had of converting his cousin Rookwood to socialism. Indeed, when he thought of the Princess, it was with the idea that Philip was in danger of being smitten with the girl's beauty.

Mrs. Todd was standing by the window, talking very volubly to Penzie. Her talk referred chiefly to the gossip of society, but she still could not understand her charge. The mixture of worldliness, pride, and simplicity was beyond her reckoning, but she had not the key to the strong character which a better and a nobler ambition might have moulded very differently.

"Is Miss Winkell at home?" said Forster absently, wondering if he could persuade the belle of the season to set up a convalescent home in her beautiful glen, whilst Philip was suddenly seized with shyness at the bare idea of approaching his divinity, and hardly knew what to say

when he found himself face to face with her in the pretty drawing-room. However, he unfortunately fell to the share of Mrs. Todd, and could only cast sideways glances at Penelope.

She herself was glad to see the two friends, for Mrs. Todd's company always made her feel sad, reminding her that she was in reality a prisoner. But Forster's presence seemed to do away with all such feelings, and Penzie was happy as she sat listening to him, even though she disagreed with most of his sentiments. On his side, Forster explained all their plans, and began to assure the Princess that her presence would give extreme pleasure to the weary and overworked cabmen.

"My uncle says it is wrong to mix oneself up with the lower orders. They do not understand us at all, and only take liberties," she said when he paused.

Forster's eyes kindled with indignation; and then, as he looked at Penelope, a new feeling suddenly entered his heart. He pitied this girl, brought up in narrow grooves and without true sympathy for her fellow creatures.

"I won't be angry with you," he said, calming down, and one of the smiles which always won him the hearts of the poor and often of their oppressors lighted up his face. "But you must promise me that for that afternoon at least you will let me show you that the gulf between rich and poor is not so deep and wide as you seem to think."

Penelope shook her head.

"I shall find nothing to say to your common people."

"But, indeed, if you only listen to them," put in Philip, "they will be delighted."

"And in time you will do more than listen, Miss Winkell," added Forster, whilst the earnestness of his tone brought a smile to Penzie's lips. "You will soon see that our life is not complete unless we find a meeting point with their lives."

"I think all that sounds well, but, indeed, you must not think that I could ever do these people any good."

"Yes, you could do much. We want such women as you to help us. I am soon going to take up my manual work, and I shall be proud to feel that by doing it I shall be learning some of the secrets of a labourer's existence."

"What work do you mean?"

"I am going to learn to be a farmer, so as to know really what tilling entails."

"Oh, don't do that," said Penzie, thinking of her father and brother, "it degrades even one who is nobly born."

"But I shall enjoy it. My ancestors have been settled on our land for many years, and the family likes to boast of it, but I can truly say that we know really nothing of the life of the labourers. Now, on my farm I shall do as the labourers do, and see with their eyes. Then I shall be able to help my London friends by getting them to come and see what toil means. It is the land which teaches all true lessons."

"Your powers will be wasted," said Penzie, still smiling. "I mean also to go back to my home, but I shall——"

She stopped, wondering why she wanted to tell Forster her private affairs, and why she felt inclined to make him acquainted with all her hopes and her ambition.

Philip at last got his turn, but he felt that he could only make stupid remarks, which did not interest the Princess as Forster's words had done, even though the subject was identical and the aim the same.

When the friends went away, Forster was the first to speak.

"Philip, your Princess is a wonderful woman. If one could make her see things properly she would be a power in the land. She has a soul above that of the ordinary pretty girl."

"Yes, isn't she perfect?"

"She has capabilities. Besides, she is certainly very beautiful. Did you notice how easily the colour comes into her cheeks and how her eyes flash? But her pride is of the wrong sort, inordinate pride of birth."

Philip glanced at his friend, and a sudden chill seemed to creep over him. Never before had he heard Forster remark upon the personal charms of any woman as if he were in the least personally interested. But no, it was impossible, Forster would not easily fall in love, and if he did his wife would not be a proud aristocrat, one of the class he thoroughly despised.

Thrusting away this idea, Philip Gillbanks threw all his energies into the Richmond party. If money could make it perfect there should be no stint. He was so glad to further his friend's plans. Forster never wanted anything for himself, though at times, for the sake of others, he made large calls on Philip's bounty.

When the day dawned, Philip found that he thought more of the Princess than of the cabmen. Indeed, when the whole company

was assembled on the beautiful lawns sloping down to the water, it was the Princess Philip looked at, not at the Rookwoods nor at his own fashionable-looking sister Clytie, who was much elated at being in such distinguished society, even though she had to accept it mixed up with Mr. Bethune's stupid cabmen. She talked rather loud and tried to patronise Penelope, but meeting only a polite but freezing reception, she had to content herself with Mrs. Todd or with the Duke when he was available.

"Come, Miss Winskell," said Forster, when he had seen his friends all seated at a splendid repast provided by Philip, "I want you to make the acquaintance of some of my club men. They are helpers to-day, learning to give as well as to receive. Miss Gillbanks I see is pouring out tea. How well she gets on with the men; and Philip is a host in himself. If I were to be asked to point out the best and most generous man in London, I should say it was Philip Gillbanks; and now I owe him a debt of gratitude for having introduced me to you."

The two were sauntering down a shady walk, at the end of which six young men were occupied in cutting sandwiches for those who were going in the pleasure boats.

As Penzie followed Forster, she began to experience the strange attractive power he undoubtedly possessed, and which made him so eminently fitted to be a leader, but her pride rebelled at the same moment that she recognised the fact.

"Mr. Gillbanks is of course compensated by your friendship," she said a little scornfully.

"You are cynical because you don't understand his goodness. Gillbanks has no thought of personal reward I assure you. I could tell you many stories of his pluck and of his unselfishness."

"He merely follows you," she said softly, "he said so."

"That's only Gillbanks's way of putting it. He can inspire people to become heroes, then he pretends they were their own seers. He believes you can help us in our work. Of course I know that now your time is very much taken up, but after the season is over——"

"I shall have other work," said Penzie, almost regretfully, for Forster's words stirred up in her visions of many possibilities. But she was now only bent on one object.

"Look how those young men work with a will," said Forster, turning the conversation. "Won't you say something to them?"

In spite of herself Penelope obeyed him. She spoke a few words, and smilingly she took up a knife and began to cut bread and butter. Forster had set the example, and, with the easy grace which always distinguished him, he talked on as if to one of his own people.

"When this is done, come and help us to wait," he said, after a time, and turning to Penelope he added, "Indeed, Miss Winskell, you must not do any more."

The young men's smiles showed that they were pleased, for Forster had the power of attracting the most raw material.

"Do you really like them?" said Penzie as they walked back. "I should do it all from a sense of duty if I did it at all, not because I cared for them."

"You must care for them. The feeling comes in spite of oneself. When Philip Gillbanks succeeds to his father's works he is going to be a model employer, and he will become a true socialist."

Penzie shrank a little from the idea of the model "nouveau riche." Forster was different. He could do these things perhaps because they amused him, not because of any hidden principle.

"Money cannot do everything for a man," she said, raising her head a little.

"Of course not, but money is a power which some few people can wield. Most persons allow it to rule them. You will see that my cousin is really rather unhappy to-day, though my friends will do him and his garden no harm."

Forster laughed as he said this, and, taking a short cut, he soon appeared once more among the assembled men.

"Now, Rookwood, you must make a speech," said Forster, putting his hand on his cousin's shoulder. "The men are expecting it. Get the House of Lords out of your mind, or rather no, give us a replica of your last utterance, it will please them immensely."

Lady Rookwood came to her husband's help.

"Tell them you are glad they are enjoying themselves."

"Hang it. I can't. It's too bad, Forster, to take my garden and then to make me perjure myself! You know I disapprove entirely of your cant."

"Phillip, Miss Winskell has been cutting

sandwiches, and the men will talk of it for a year," said Forster, not answering his injured cousin.

"How very good of you," said Phillip. "We are now going to reward their exertions by letting them row us on the river. I have a boat ready fitted up for ladies."

"How very sweet!" said Mrs. Todd, and Clytie remarked that she was glad that they also were going to have some reward.

When metaphorically brought to the water Lord Rookwood did drink; in other words he made a short and very kindly speech, which the men applauded, and they further shocked his sense of propriety by striking up, "For he's a jolly good fellow." To Penzie's surprise, she noticed that Forster joined in, and then he began to collect the various water parties which Phillip had arranged.

That evening Penzie could not remember what was said and done on the water. She knew that Mr. Gillbanks had done everything in a princely style, but the only part of the day which the Princess recollected with pleasure, was the short walk she had with Forster Bethune. His face seemed to be continually appearing before her mind. She did not know why she should think of him—she did not even ask herself the question—but she sat for a long time by her open window, dreaming as she never dreamed before.

THE OLD ROAD TO SOUTHAMPTON.

AT the once famous corner, where the two great western roads divide, just out of Hounslow Town, we follow the one to the left, saluted by the trumpets of the gallant Hussars in the barracks close by. An autumnal mist hangs over the landscape, and autumnal tints are spread over the wide fields, where there is more room for their display upon acres of cabbages, marrows, and other succulent vegetables, than on the scanty foliage of the trees.

Bedfont is the first break in the monotony of the road, where a momentary interest is excited by the sight of the curious yew-trees in the churchyard, which, according to tradition, were trimmed into the shape of fighting cocks by some sporting parson of a former century, who thus sought to alleviate the gloomy influences of the place. And was not the "Black Dog" at Bedfont the favoured rendezvous

of the coaching men of an earlier generation! Here the B.D.C., or Bensington Driving Club, had its head-quarters, and the quiet, sleepy village would be all alive with four-in-hand drags steered by the choice spirits of the coaching ring. An earlier record shows how, one September evening in 1768, just at this spot, Bedford lane end, the stage coach from Exeter was stopped by a dashing highwayman, "well mounted on a bay horse with a switch tail." Whatever we may think of the morality of the proceeding, it was a deed of desperate courage, single-handed to arrest the great lumbering machine with its four or six horses; its dozen or so of passengers, many of whom must have been armed; and to put all under contribution. But the guard was a resolute fellow, too, and levelling his blunderbuss, he discharged a shower of balls at the bold highwayman, who fell dead from his horse, which galloped off nobody knew whither. There would be some compassion among the female passengers for this fine young fellow, wrapped in a handsome drab surtout, who lay welling out his life-blood in the dust; but the men doubtless pronounced him "well served," and his body was dragged off to the "Ball Inn," close by. Thence, according to received tradition, it was carried away in a hearse, and by six horses; while a weeping lady, closely veiled, followed in a mourning coach.

But we shall meet with plenty of highwaymen further on, and may push on for Staines Bridge, time out of mind the chief crossing place of the Thames for those stepping westwards. So that, as a matter of precaution whenever there was danger apprehended from the west, Staines Bridge would be broken down to hinder its passage. In later ages it was chiefly dreaded on account of its toll-bar, which there were no means of doubling round or avoiding. There was always a fight among the toll contractors at the periodical auction for the farming of the tolls at Staines Bridge, and all kinds of queer dodges were resorted to for getting the best of an opponent. The leviathan of the latter-day coaching roads was one "Joshua," a Yorkshire lad from Leeds, who by himself and his nominees controlled most of the coaching roads from Land's End to John o' Groats, and who made a special strategic point of Staines Bridge. Its importance may be judged by referring to any of the old road books of the coaching times, which show coaches

to Winchester, Southampton, Salisbury, Exeter, Dorchester, Plymouth, Penzance, with many other stages and waggons for these and intermediate towns, and add to these the constant rumbling and jolting of postchaises, phaetons, gigs, and tax carts, the continuous rattle of wheels and clatter of hoofs by night and day, and judge if the toll collector on Staines Bridge could have had a happy life, with his hand against every man's and detested even more than the highwayman.

But there is no toll-bar to annoy us now, and we may rattle over Staines Bridge with a glance at the river, which is not at its best just here, but embanked and tidied up, looks brighter than it used to do in that middle period when gasometers and factories were the only prominent objects. And now we are in Egham, and just the crossing of the shining river seems to have landed us, like Bunyan's pilgrims, in a new and more blessed country. Here we have hill and dale, and hanging woods, rich in the dying loveliness of their foliage, with lawns and gardens, and terraces suffused with crimson and gold. Egham is passed, pretty but inconsiderable, with "Cooper's Hill" on the right, crowned by the buildings of the Engineering College. If "majestic Denham," the poet of "Cooper's Hill," could revisit these glimpses of the moon, he might point with some pride to the realisation of the prophetic passage in his famed description of "Thames, the most lov'd of all the Ocean's sons," who, in his god-like bounty,

Finds wealth where 'tis, bestows it where it wants,
Cities in deserts, woods in cities plants.

From Cooper's Hill you look down on Runnymede, on Magna Charta Island and the windings of the Thames, where the towers of Windsor rise proudly above, and the antique spires of Eton, all embraced in a setting of mingled forest and plain, the plain as Denham describes it, perhaps too majestically,

Low at his foot a spacious plain is plac'd
Between the mountain and the stream embrac'd,
Which shade and shelter from the hill derives,
While the kind river wealth and beauty gives.

But our road avoids the hills and winds pleasantly along past Englefield Green, and then, leaving the sunny, open country, passes into what seems to be a noble forest glade; and, indeed, we are now in the purlieus of the great forest of Windsor; and although, technically, the district was disafforested some centuries ago, yet it is now, perhaps, more forest than ever, in the

sense in which a forest is a woodland scene. Nothing finer could you have in the way of a forest drive than this, with the solemn arcades of its pine-woods, the stretches of golden bracken, the dying richness of all the wild forest growth.

There Faunus and Sylvanus keep their courts, And there is the most pleasant hush and stillness over everything, while the fragrance of pine-wood and bracken flavour the crisp air of autumn.

"You don't ketch me often along down here, not much. You look for me atop of a tram, along by Westminster Bridge Road, that's where you have me!" And then a loud laugh in which other voices join, but with more constraint. "Yes, I s'pect you'll find this too quiet for you, 'Liza, after what you've been used to."

And here we have Eliza on the wood-crowned height, and this is her estimate of its advantages. But Eliza is clearly coming home on a holiday visit, and desires to impress her sister and another—an old sweetheart, perhaps—with a sense of the change that has come over her. It is a shock to her to find Lubin looking so countrified, and her sister, too, in her queer little cape and limp-looking skirts. Perhaps Lubin, too, is disenchanted. Is this the bright, rosy-cheeked lass whom I kissed so fondly, and who wept on my bosom as we parted, this tall young woman in the leg-of-mutton sleeves and frilled shirt-front?

But Eliza and Lubin are lost to sight in a turn of the road, and presently we are in sight of the famous old "Wheataheaf," shining white and cheerful against its surroundings of dark forest. There, by the porch, among other autumn leaves, flutters the announcement of the usual end of season sale of the "Virginia Water" coach horses. For here is winter coming upon us, the coaches are knocking off, and the railway boards are exhibiting "Last Excursion of the season" bills. But we are very well here, nevertheless. Summer, autumn, spring, or winter never finds the forest lacking in charm.

A little beyond the "Wheataheaf" is a wicket gate that gives access to Virginia Water, and a hundred yards or so through a thicket of evergreens brings us to the margin of this sweet retired lake. Just now it is a scene of marvellous beauty, for the trees are fully clothed in all the mysterious tints of autumn; and the placid lake, embosomed in woods, reflects the rich colouring of its tufted banks, which rise

from height to height in charming gradation of colour.

Here would be another surprise for Sir John Denham's ghost, who naturally would know nothing about Virginia Water, for it was not in existence what time he was in possession of his corporeal substance. Yet the name is well known to him, as that of a stream here flowing out of the forest, and there was also a Virginia Gate close by, so that the name was not invented for the occasion of making the lake, which feat was accomplished by the Duke of Cumberland, soon after the crowning victory of Culloden. Nature, we may say, has fully adopted the human handiwork, and has made of it in this autumn-time one of the fairest scenes to be witnessed on this earth of ours.

Not as much can be said for the cascade, which we soon pass upon the road, for there is but a ha'porth of water to an unconscionable deal of stone, and rocks do not jump on each other quite in the fashion in which they are here piled by the landscape gardener. But after this the way through the forest is all one delicious pine-scented track, hedged with the gold of the dying bracken or the faded rose tints of the heather, till we come out upon the commonplace world at Shrubahill, with the compensation of wider views of a grand broken country of hill and dale, closed in by summits of quite portentous blackness and gloom.

Then the road crosses the railway close to Sunningdale Station, and a few dozen yards further on stands a milestone with the inscription: "23 Miles from Hyde Park Corner." On the left opens out a bridle-path over the heath, that looks wild enough in its contours, although now mostly enclosed and cultivated, and it is a path that is well worth following, leading into the heart of the wild country of heaths and downs, scored by ancient entrenchments, some of vast extent, and also by the delving and digging of the modern sapper, what time the camp of Chobham stirred up our military susceptibilities, not long before the notable Crimean War.

But the western highway lies before us still with the appearance of a wide forest track, yet wide and of a pleasant yellow tint, with a broad footway at the side. It stretches out in view for miles in long swatches, up and down, like the undulations of some vast ocean, but straight as it is there is

Variety which all the rest endears.

On one side are wild-looking hills, on the

other nurseries and plantations, with every variety of tree and shrub; while at places the road assumes the appearance of a majestic avenue, with rows of forest trees on either hand. In early summer the scene is brightened by the gay tints of acres of flowering shrubs; but autumn is almost better for the splendid show of conifers, which keeps up its bravery for all the winter long. Most strange and beautiful forms of every known species almost of the great family of the fir tribe are here, from the rude, majestic mountain pine to the deodora with its velvet-like masses of foliage, and all growing with health and freedom. Beautiful, too, are the birches, that grow to big trees, with their delicate foliage now all splashed with gold; while beeches tinged with russet red, and the dark firs with their ruddy boles, make an effective background to the whole. Between the trees we have glimpses of fields, paddocks, gardens, and pleasant country houses, while substantial pillar letter-boxes at short intervals remind us that here is no forest wild, but a city in a desert, like that our poet foresaw.

The road is not to say deserted, for at every quarter of a mile or so you meet a little group of wayfarers—a man with a prison crop and a basket half-filled with crockery; a woman with baskets to sell, while another, lone-looking and wretched, is gathering dead sticks, and fallen acorns, and beech mast. A lean man in an American buggy is driving a naked-looking trotter, the butcher and baker go past at speed. And now through the trees one hears a piano, and a vibrant female voice, that sings one of the melancholy songs of the period. It is a powerful voice, for it comes from the pretty white villa screened behind the trees, whose open windows let in the crisp morning air and let out the flood of song.

A little further there is a finger-post, which is evidently new and up to date. No need to scramble up that post and try to light a match, one dark, windy night, to read that inscription. "A mile and a half," says one arm in distinct characters, "to Sunningdale"; the same measure, in another direction, to Windlesham; and a third arm points the way we should go, and for a like distance, to reach Bagshot. For the whole mile and a half from Sunningdale there is no tavern or roadside inn, and that on an old coaching road is a pretty clear indication of what a desert track this was before the railway age. But

here is one at last, the "Windmill," at the cross-roads. Doubtless there was a real windmill on the hill long ago, and a gibbet, too, probably not far off, with a dead highwayman swinging dolefully in the wind.

Still the road stretches on in pleasant graceful fashion—a real forest road with rural scenes let in. Now we have a vast ploughed field, where men and horses, grouped together in picturesque fashion, are taking their midday refreshment, with ploughs and huge rollers and big machines of various kinds scattered around. And we have pastures, too, and the tinkle of a cow bell as the leader of the herd turns this way or the other over the down. Then we come to a steep incline with a pleasant view of an old coaching inn at the foot, with its shiny bow windows and red-roofed stables, and a green in front with trees that shade the dusty highway. And this brings us to Bagshot Bridge, over a tiny ripple of water, and to Bagshot town on the slope of the hill. Here are inns in plenty, leading off with the "Three Mariners," the first indication we have met with of this being a seafaring track. Bagshot Park lies to the right; we passed two or three of its lodge gates, newly painted red, just before descending to the town. Here was a Royal seat, a hunting lodge for Tudors and Stuarts, and its present occupant is evident enough in the signs of the shops, most of which claim some special appointment to the Duke of Connaught.

Bagshot is a breezy, healthy little place, "ruined and desolated by railways," write the chroniclers of the forties and fifties; but that has since risen from its ashes, and with nice shops and quaint houses shows every sign of pleasant prosperity. Over the roofs of the little town show wild-looking hills, and a new red church is perched upon an adjoining eminence. Fine cedars shade the road; everywhere are trees, fine gardens, nurseries, shrubberies; and this is a district that, less than a century ago, was as bare and desolate as could be.

From Bagshot the road winds higher and higher, till you reach an inn of ancient fame, the "Golden Farmer," now renamed the "Jolly Farmer," although neither gold nor jollity is much in the farmer's way just now. But turning round, you will see what a strange, romantic spot this is, with its "horrid" ravine, as savage-looking as you please, while beyond are some of the

blackest looking hills you ever saw, rude, and weird, and solemn, with knobs here and there of awful blackness. In 1753, when a turnpike Act was passed for making that road to the left through Frimley and Farnham, the place is described as the "Golden Farmer." But in an earlier Act of 1727 the spot is described as the "Basingstone," near Bagshot; and a plan of Windsor Forest of the Stuart period shows the Basingstone on the present site of the "Farmer," with Winmore Cross close by, and a gibbet with a man hanging there on the side of the hill; so that the name probably attached to the inn between the two dates before mentioned, and tradition gives the following account of its origin.

Once upon a time the gloomy, desolate track leading to Winchester, Southampton, and the west was infested by a determined highwayman, who waylaid the best appointed carriages and horsemen, and made them stand and deliver. Gold he would have, and nothing else; bills and notes might go free for him; nor would he touch anything of personal belongings, such as watches, jewellery, and so on. This peculiarity, if it did not endear him to passers-by, anyhow acquired for him a certain distinction. People spoke of him as the golden highwayman. But the officers of the law could make nothing of him; he eluded all their researches, and vanished with the same suddenness as he appeared. At the same period flourished a farmer, who farmed some half-hundred acres of the not very fertile heathland. He had sheep also, no doubt, who grazed the wild pasture all round. But anyhow, at fair or market the young farmer was always to be found, buying or selling, with his sack full of money, and always paying in gold. In this way he became known as the Golden Farmer; when some clever runner from Bow Street, putting this and the other together, set a snare, and lo! the golden farmer and the highwayman were one and the same. And soon the golden one was swinging in the wind, and the farmhouse became an inn, with the sign to keep its former occupant in memory.

This is just the place for stories of highwaymen, and here is one, an early one, of this very place. Here we have "Robert Throgmorton, of an honourable, ancient, and worthy family; William Porter, also of clear blood and respectable ancestors; and Bishop, of no less dignity in birth, admiration of wit, and height of

courage." Living together in the city of London in wild, intemperate fashion, but united in the strictest bonds of brotherly affection, they exhaust their means, and to supply their wasteful courses they "go out upon the highway with good horses, good swords, and minds emptied of all virtue." Perhaps Shakespeare had these men in his mind when he makes Orlando ask:

What! would'st thou have me go and beg my food,
Or with a base and boisterous sword enforce
A thievish living on the common road?

Not far beyond Bagshot they overtook two citizens of London, "and one Smith, a marchant of Southampton," riding together. The marchant lingers behind, and Throgmorton and Porter dash up to the citizens, "and these, with affrighted humbleness, deliver up all they possess." The robbers then strip the bridles from the citizens' horses, and turn them loose, and are about to bind the citizens themselves, when they hear a cry for help from their comrade. Bishop had ridden up to the Southampton man, who had dismounted, and demanded his purse. But this last, being a man of courage, drew his sword, and bade the other "keep off." He would only part with his money with his life, and he fought with such determination that, closing with Bishop, he threw him to the ground and fell upon him. But now the robber's two comrades came running up, and Smith, thinking to gain his horse and escape, left the man whom he had held at his mercy, and spared; who rose in fury—the fury of a "gentleman" who has been "sat upon" by a stout merchant—pursued, and ran his man through the body.

The other two robbers are overwhelmed with grief and dismay at the sight of the foul deed. But they do not forget to take the dead man's money—three score and fifteen pounds—and then ride away. But by this time the two citizens left unbound have recovered their horses, and they ride after at a prudent distance, keeping their men in sight till, coming into a peopled country, they raise the hue and cry, which fly along the road, like the fiery cross, and presently the fugitives are surrounded and captured. The robbers had fled towards Oxford, and had crossed the Thames before they were captured, a chase of at least sixteen miles. They were imprisoned in Oxford Castle, but brought to Southwark for their trials at the assizes held on St. Margaret's Hill. Bishop spoke boldly for his comrades at the trial. "Moses," he said, "asks but

one for one. Therefore, let mercy be shown to these poor gentlemen, and let them not suffer for my deed, for I am the guilty man and none other." But no mercy was shown, and the three were hanged together. After death the bodies of Throgmorton and Porter were allowed honourable burial in the churchyard of St. George's, while Bishop's was hung up to feed the crows of Bagshot Heath.

Somewhere about here; where these two grim ancient stones stand on each side of the highway—fragments probably of the great monolith that stood here and marked the boundary of some ancient kingdom, the Basingstone of the old maps—it is startling to be accosted by a wild, gaunt figure above the common height of man, with a request to "help a labouring man along the road."

But the man is a good honest fellow in the way of an old navy, who has trudged from Southampton, where he has been at work in the dock excavating line. This is Thursday, and he started on Monday with nothing to carry but himself and the clothes he wears, and yet leaving nothing behind. A cheery old bird he is too; sixty-seven and hard at work all his life; he has worked under the giant contractors of old, he goes on working under the pigmies of modern days. Many a load has he sent to the tip, many a cutting he has helped to dig, where now the trains whirl past laden with wealth and fashion. As for the road, he has not much to say about it, except that he found it a pretty dull piece between Basingstoke and Winchester.

It is rather encouraging to meet with some one who has actually come from Southampton this way. But bear in mind that at the "Golden Farmer" we have two routes open to us; one by Aldershot and Farnham, and so by Bentley, Alton—does anybody remember the Alton ale-houses and the sandwiches of old times?—and then by New Arlesford into the Itchen valley, a pleasant diversified line of country. But our way to the right between the grim Basingstones is the older way, and not to be beaten in wild romantic scenery.

Certainly the hills about here are the blackest you ever saw; and with a bit of storm looming over them they look quite demoniac. There are wild holt; by the way; but all with gas and water laid on, as the auctioneers' boards inform you; and then you suddenly tumble upon a

little town, half forest, and half smart new shops. It is Camberley, and hereabouts the lads from Sandhurst are very much in evidence. You see them at the station bareheaded, all but a friend with a bull-pup who is going off by train, and upon whom they recklessly pour in the floating literature of the bookstall. You meet them tramping across the country, looking very much bored under the guidance of a veteran professor of military sketching; you see them more at home on hired hacks, galloping over the heath to join the hounds at cub-hunting, and without misgivings as to being taken for the quarry.

What is most surprising to meet in Camberley is a little French boy, quite at home and able to chaff the Camberley boys into fits, if only they will not throw stones. He carries strings of onions on a stick and goes perseveringly from house to house, "Buy 'ny ognions sheap!" He, too, comes from Southampton, where whole families land from France with shiploads of onions, and make their way, trafficking as they go, and spread themselves among the Surrey villages. When their onions are sold they go back to their farms and grow some more. Such, at least, is the account that the villagers give, and the bright-eyed, dark-faced little chap is not very communicative. He owns to Brittany, indeed, "from St. Malo, oui, oui," but after every reply it is always impatiently, "Mais voulez vous des ognons, monsieur?"

Beyond Camberley we come to Blackwater, and cross the river by a bridge, "where you can stand in three counties at once," say the villagers. And from that point the road follows a line of country marvellously wild and broken, with wide views here and there over a vast extent of country. It is dreary at places, but at others full of charm. Eversley lies over the hill, and Bramshill Park, a famous old mansion. But villages are sparse and few along our line of road, which leaves the wilderness at Hartford Bridge, and comes into a softer, more settled country. Then there is Hook, with an ancient inn, the "Raven," dated 1653, and Natelyscures, with a tiny Norman church. A short detour to the right brings us to Old Basing, with its mighty earthworks—a huge circular entrenchment still perfect in contour, while the castle of the Paulets, that was held four years for the King by the stout Marquis, in the Civil Wars, has left hardly a vestige behind—and then comes Basingstoke, a busy country town

with a fine church, and on the hill above a curious "chapel of the Holy Ghost," of Henry the Seventh's time. From here the road is over a wide, woldy, rolling country of downs and sheepwalks, with thatched villages here and there, until, in approaching Winchester, all this is changed. The old Royal city is environed by pleasant parks and woods, and its high street is as bright and charming as can be imagined, with the old gate and the massive buildings of the King's house now occupied as barracks. Then there are the quaint and charming Piazzas, the market cross, and the passage under the old houses to the cathedral—Walkelyn's cathedral, Wykeham's tomb house, where the bones of Saint Swithin still lie. And don't let us forget Jane Austen and Isaac Walton while we are looking for the tombs of Rufus and the rest.

And there is St. Cross in the way, with its almshouses of noble poverty, where you may claim the ale and manchet of bread that is the due of wayfarers; and so through the sweet, pleasant country to Chandlers Ford, where the soft beauties of the Itchen valley begin to develop, and presently in a beautiful country of woods and pastures, with the shadow of the New Forest behind it, stretches Southampton Water, its silvery channel dotted with white sails and streaked with the smoke of ocean steamers, while beyond, like a cloud on the horizon, lies the beautiful Vectis, the ever green Isle of Wight.

A GREEK PUPPET SHOW.

WHEN we pass in review the progress which has been accomplished in every branch of scientific knowledge since the dawn of the nineteenth century, we are too much inclined to look down with compassion on the generations which have preceded us, and to fancy that the ancient world was ignorant of the exact sciences, or despised them as unworthy of its attention. It seems to us that Greek and Roman society was principally composed of orators and statesmen, of poets and of artists, whose minds, absorbed in the exclusive study of man, were indifferent to the universe which surrounded them, and cared not to enquire into its mysteries. It is true that the nations of antiquity from whom our culture is mostly derived were more given to

metaphysical and political speculations than to researches into the laws which govern the material world, and that when the Greek philosophers did seek to account for the various phenomena of nature, their explanations appear to us childish and fantastic, from their ignorance of laws to the knowledge of which mankind has attained only after long centuries of tedious and painful toil. But even in those days, when all culture which was not purely intellectual was apparently undervalued or despised, there were not wanting engineers and men of science, gifted with active brains and dextrous hands, who, though they could not clearly define the laws which regulate the action of the forces of nature, were well acquainted from experience with many of their practical applications. The wedge, the pulley, the lever, the windlass, the screw, the siphon, and the pump, were well known to the Greeks some centuries before the Christian era; while, in the construction of the ponderous machines destined to hurl stones or darts for the attack or the defence of a beleaguered city, they showed a thorough knowledge of the principles of mechanics, and a remarkable capacity for finding the solution of the various problems which they encountered. That they could also condescend to more trivial matters, and apply their skill to the planning of ingenious toys for the amusement of the public, we may learn from the works of Heron of Alexandria.

This celebrated mathematician, who lived in the second century before Christ, is still principally remembered by two of his many inventions—namely, the fountain which acts by compressed air, and the aeropile, a metal sphere suspended on pivots over a lamp, and partly filled with water, the steam from which, issuing from two tubes turned in contrary directions, causes it to revolve rapidly on its axis. In his book entitled "Πνευματικά" he exposes very fully all that was known in his time with regard to the equilibrium and movement of fluids, and the elasticity of air under the influence of heat and pressure. We find there the first idea of the automatic machines to be seen at the present day in every railway station; for he shows how to construct a vase which, on the insertion of a piece of five drachmas into a slot, would pour out a certain quantity of lustral water to the worshippers in a temple. He describes also, under the name of "the siphons employed at a conflagra-

tion," a fire-engine fully as efficacious as those which were in use so late as the end of the seventeenth century.

Heron is less known as a constructor of automata, though his treatise on the subject is highly interesting, as it reveals to us the simple methods employed by the ancients for producing motive power in the absence of the many resources furnished by modern science. The work was translated into Italian by Bernardino Baldi, of Urbino, in 1569, and into Latin by Couture, in 1693; but it remained practically inaccessible to the majority of students till the appearance of the erudite commentary presented to the French Academy in 1884 by M. Victor Prou, whose translation and notes have been of great assistance in preparing this article.

Heron divides his automata into two classes: the *Υπάγωνα* and the *Στατή ἀνθρώπου*—those, namely, which acted on a moveable stage, which advanced automatically to a given point, and retreated when the performance was ended, and those which represented in a stationary theatre a play divided into acts by changes of scene.

As an example of the former class, Heron describes the apotheosis of Bacchus, which was apparently shown on the occasion of some festival on the stage of a theatre or in the centre of a circus. A basement in the form of an oblong chest, mounted on three wheels, supported a pedestal ornamented with pilasters and a cornice; on the top stood a circular temple crowned with a dome, upheld by six columns, and surmounted by a winged Victory carrying a wreath. Within was a statue of Bacchus bearing the thyrsis and a cup. A panther lay stretched at his feet; in front of the temple and in its rear were two altars laden with fire-wood, and beside each column stood a Bacchante. This edifice was placed at a certain part of the stage; it then rolled forward some distance automatically, and stopped in presence of the public. The wood on the altar in front of Bacchus immediately took fire, a jet of milk sprang from the thyrsis, and wine flowed from the cup held by the god. At the same moment garlands of flowers appeared on the sides of the pedestal, a sound of tambourines and cymbals was heard, and the Bacchantes danced round the temple. When the music ceased, the statues of Bacchus and of Victory faced round, and the second altar took fire in its turn. Milk flowed

again from the thyrsis, and wine from the cup; the instruments resounded, and the Bacchantes repeated their dance. The machine then rolled back to its former station.

Heron describes minutely the construction of this chariot and the mechanism of its automata. He recommends that the basement and pedestal should be of such small dimensions that there may be no grounds for suspecting that the figures are moved by a person concealed inside. The lightest materials should be employed, all the parts should be accurately finished in the lathe, and the metal pivots and sockets kept well oiled. To ensure that the chariot should follow a given direction, he advises laying down boards, on which furrows, for the wheels to roll in, should be formed by nailing down wooden bars; and Heron may thus claim to have invented the tramway, as he was also the first to demonstrate the motive power of steam.

To move the machine and the puppets it carried, the pedestal on which they stood contained a hopper, filled with millet or mustard seed, the grains of which, Heron remarks, are light and slippery. As they poured out through a small orifice, which an attendant opened by pulling a string when the time came for beginning the performance, a heavy leaden weight resting upon them descended slowly, and a cord passing from it over a pulley to a drum fixed upon the axle of the two larger wheels caused them to revolve, and carried the chariot forward. It was brought back to its place, when the show was over, by another cord, wound round the drum in a contrary sense, which reversed the action of the wheels. Other cords of different lengths attached to the weight, and pulled by it as it descended, moved the pivots on which turned the statues of Bacchus and Victory, as well as a flat ring revolving round the base of the temple, which carried the Bacchantes, and was moved by cords hidden in a groove on its inner sides.

The action of the weight also opened and shut the valves which allowed milk and wine to flow from reservoirs placed in the cupola of the temple, through pipes passing down one of the columns to the cup and thyrsis held by Bacchus. The altars were made of metal, and within them burned a lamp; its flame lighted the pile of chips and shavings through an orifice closed by a bronze plate, which was pulled aside at the proper moment. The garlands which appeared suddenly on the four sides of the

pedestal had lain concealed in the cornice, where they were supported by trap-doors held by a pin. When this was withdrawn the doors gave way, and the garlands, weighted with lead, fell into their places. The rattling of tambourines, and the clashing of cymbals, which accompanied the dance of the Bacchantes, were imitated by leaden balls falling upon a drum, and rebounding from it upon brazen plates. The cords which produced these movements were fixed to the various parts of the machinery by means of loops passing over pegs, which became detached, and fell off when the action of the puppets was to cease. It was, therefore, necessary to rearrange the cords after each performance, a tedious operation, but clockwork moved by a spring was still unknown.

To the automata just described, Heron preferred those which acted in a stationary theatre, as they allowed the choice of a greater variety of subjects. He proceeds, therefore, to describe a little tragedy in five acts which represented the legend of Nauplius; Philo of Byzantium, a contemporary engineer, had invented its mechanism, and Heron justly claimed to have much perfected and simplified it.

The adventures of Nauplius, King of Eubœa, and of his son Palamedes, were related in the poems known as the Epic Cycle, of which only a few fragments remain; but we know from later writers that Agias of Troezen, in the "Nostoi," and Stasinus of Cyprus, in the "Cypria," have sung the treacherous murder of the son, and the vengeance of the father upon the Greeks returning from the siege of Troy. In these poems Palamedes seems to have been represented as another Prometheus, a master of all the sciences and a benefactor to the human race by his useful inventions. Alone among the Greek chiefs he had led no soldiers to Troy, but his universal knowledge enabled him to render important services to the army of the Greeks, and in the legends which have come down to us, he is opposed to Ulysses as the type of a nobler kind of intellect, strongly contrasted with the selfish cunning of his enemy, to whose treachery he fell a victim. Palamedes was said to have discovered that the madness, under pretence of which the King of Ithaca sought to escape from the obligation of following the Atreidæ to Troy, was merely feigned, and during the siege he provoked still more his animosity by deriding his want of courage. A false

accusation of treason to the Greeks was brought against him by Ulysses, and the adroitly concocted proofs which supported it made it appear that he corresponded with Priam, and was on the point of betraying the Greek army to the Trojans. Achilles and Ajax of Locri, the friends of Palamedes, were absent at the time, and he was stoned to death by the Greeks, uttering no lamentations over his fate, but merely saying, "I pity thee, O Truth! for thou hast perished before me."

When, after the fall of Troy, the confederated chiefs were returning to their homes, the Greek fleet was assailed off the Island of Eubœa, near Cape Caphareum, by a violent tempest raised by the anger of the gods who were irritated by the pillage and destruction of their temples, and Athene hurled a thunderbolt on Ajax, son of Oileus, to avenge the desecration of her shrine, whence he had dragged the priestess Cassandra. Nauplius seized the opportunity to destroy the murderers of his son. He displayed a torch at the most dangerous part of the rocky coast; the Greeks steered their vessels towards it; and most of them were wrecked and many warriors perished.

Such was the tale which Philo of Byzantium had chosen to represent by means of automata, and Heron did not consider it beneath the dignity of a man of science to take up the work after him, and seek to execute the movements of the puppets by more simple and efficacious methods.

The little theatre—which he calls *πινάξ*, a tablet or picture—stood upon a short column; it was ornamented with a pediment like a temple, and was closed by folding-doors instead of a curtain. These swung open of themselves, and displayed a view of the seashore, with groups of workmen busily engaged in constructing ships. Some were sawing, others hammering; others handled the auger or the hatchet, and Heron assures us that their tools made a noise like those of real workmen. After a few minutes the doors closed, and when they opened again the scene showed another part of the coast, with the Greeks dragging their vessels into the sea. At the beginning of the third act there appeared merely the sky and the sea, over which the Greek fleet presently came sailing in battle array, while dolphins bounded alongside, springing out of the waves. Then the sea became rough and stormy, and the Greek ships, formed in line, ran swiftly before the wind. The fourth act

showed the coast of Eutœa, and Nauplius was seen brandishing his torch, while Athene advanced and stood beside him to show that he acted as minister of her vengeance. The doors opened for the fifth and last time on a view of the wreck of the Greek ships on the rocks of Cape Caphareum, and Ajax was seen struggling through the waves towards a temple which crowned the promontory. Athene appeared again, a peal of thunder was heard, a flash of lightning struck Ajax, who disappeared, and the tragedy came an end.

The theatre in which these puppets were shown must have presented a certain resemblance to the well-known pictures with cardboard figures moved by clock-work, but differed from them by the changes of scene and the doors opening and closing automatically, which divided the performance into acts. The mechanism was exceedingly simple and ingenious. The moving force was a heavy weight sliding in a hopper filled with sand. The Greek shipwrights who appeared in the first act were painted on the scene at the back of the theatre, their arms bearing the tools being alone moveable; the pivots on which they were fixed passed through the picture and carried on the other side a lever which rose and fell by the action of a toothed wheel and a counterweight. The scenes representing the sea, the coast, and the shipwreck, were painted on thin linen, and kept rolled up out of sight in the upper part of the theatre, where they were held by a peg; and when this was withdrawn by the action of the weight they fell into their place. The views of the ships sailing past in good order as a fleet, and then driven by the gale, were painted on a long band of paper, which was drawn across the stage between two rollers hidden on each side of the proscenium. The dolphins were mounted on a drum fixed beneath the stage, and, as it turned, they rose and fell through a slit in the flooring. The device of a lamp hidden in a metal box, which was employed to light the altars in the apotheosis of Bacchus, was again adopted to produce the flame which lit up the stage, and was supposed to proceed from the torch held by Nauplius. A thin slip of wood painted and gilt represented the thunderbolt which struck Ajax; it was weighted with lead and slid along two tightly stretched cords, painted black so as to be invisible. At the same instant, another scene painted like the sea was let down suddenly, and hid Ajax from sight,

whilst the thunder was imitated by the falling of leaden balls upon a drum. The folding-doors which served as a curtain and hid the changes of scene, were opened and shut by a very ingenious contrivance. The pivots upon which they turned descended into a chamber placed beneath the stage. There they were connected by cords wound round them with a horizontal shaft, which, by making at given intervals a half-turn backwards or forwards, pulled the doors to and fro. To produce this oscillating movement the shaft carried on opposite sides two rows of pegs, to which a cord connected with the weight was attached by loops, in a zig-zag pattern, and as the weight descended, it pulled alternately one side or the other, after a lapse of time regulated by the length of cord allowed to hang loose between the pegs.

Though Heron does not state the fact, it is probable that, during the performance, the action of the puppets was accompanied and interpreted by the recital of the poem on which the little drama was founded. For pantomimic scenes were usually danced not only to the sound of the flute, but to that of a chorus which sang the legend acted by the mime. It is also probable that many other episodes, either from Homer or from the Cyclic poets who sang the adventures of the Greek heroes subsequently to the siege of Troy, were exhibited to the people in a similar fashion, for Heron concludes his treatise by remarking that all theatres of automata are constructed and worked on the same system, though they differ from each other according to the subject of the play represented.

"WHAT WILL MRS. GRUNDY SAY?"

THIS, probably, is the most widely-spread of all popular quotations. For almost a century it has been current in English society and literature. And not only that. "Mrs. Grundy" has gradually become a personification of all that is most respectable and law-abiding in our social order. She has been elevated into a sort of fetish—a goddess whose behests must be attended to under penalty of ostracism—a species of modern "She-who-must-be-obeyed."

"Mrs. Grundy," in fact, is the embodiment of the national instinct for propriety—an instinct which cannot readily or safely be ignored or violated.

How comes it that this name, of all names, has been bestowed upon the great arbiter of morals and manners? Why "Mrs. Grundy," any more than "Mrs. Brown" or "Mrs. Robinson"?

The story is a curious one; and, in order to tell it, we must go back in thought to the year 1800, when a play by Thomas Morton, called "Speed the Plough," was produced successfully at Covent Garden. The work was of no great literary or dramatic merit. The main features of the plot are absurdly melodramatic, and some of the language is exceedingly high-flown. The piece, however, is happy in some of its comic characters. Very little interest attaches to the woes and loves of Henry Blandford, who is hated and persecuted by his uncle, Sir Phillip, because his father did that uncle wrong; but, on the other hand, Sir Abel Handy, the foolish "inventor," and his conceited son, Bob, are diverting people; and Farmer Ashfield and his wife, who befriend the unlucky Henry, are not only entertaining, but very true to nature.

It is to Dame Ashfield that we owe the famous and familiar query—"What will Mrs. Grundy say?" Mrs. Grundy, in the play, is the wife of Farmer Grundy, and a neighbour of the Ashfields. She has no part in the action of the piece, but figures constantly in the conversation of Dame Ashfield. The truth is, the latter lady is jealous of Dame Grundy. The two are rivals, apparently—socially and in business. The very first thing we hear of Mrs. Grundy is that, in Dame Ashfield's opinion, her butter is "quite the crack of the market." When the curtain rises, Dame Ashfield comes in from the town, and tells her husband that "Farmer Grundy's wheat brought five shillings a quarter more than ours did." Then follows the reference to the other Dame's butter; and it becomes clear that Mrs. Grundy is a favourite subject of talk with Mrs. Ashfield.

"Be quiet, wool ye!" cries old Ashfield; "always ding dinging Dame Grundy into my ears. 'What will Mrs. Grundy say?' 'What will Mrs. Grundy think?' Can't thee be quiet, let her alone, and behave thyself pratty!"

"Certainly I can," says the Dame. "I'll tell thee, Tummus, what she said at church last Sunday."

"Canst thee tell what parson said? Noa! Then I'll tell thee. A' said that envy were as foul a weed as grows, and

cankers all wholesome plants that come near it—that's what a' said."

"And do you think I envy Mrs. Grundy, indeed?" says the Dame.

"Why dan't lettan her alone, then! I do verily think, when thee goest to t'other world, the wurst question thee't ax 'll be if Mrs. Grundy's there. Zoa be quiet, and behave pratty, doo'e."

But the Dame cannot be quiet. No sooner is this rebuke out of her husband's mouth than she begins to tell him how she has met a procession of coaches and servants belonging to Sir Abel Handy, and how a "handsome young man, dressed all in lace, pulled off his hat to me, and said: 'Mrs. Ashfield, do me the honour of presenting that letter to your husband.' So there he stood without his hat. Oh, Tummus, had you seen how Mrs. Grundy looked!"

"Dom Mrs. Grundy!" cries the irate farmer; "be quiet, and let I read, wool ye!"

The letter is from his daughter Susan, and mentions that Sir Abel Handy has just been married to Nelly, a former servant of the Ashfields. At once Dame Ashfield recurs to her dominant idea.

"Our Nelly married to a great Baronet! I wonder, Tummus, what Mrs. Grundy will say!"

So, again, when Evergreen, the gardener, enters, and says, "Have you heard the news?" "Anything about Mrs. Grundy?" asks the irrepressible lady. No; the news is about Sir Phillip Blandford, Henry's uncle; and that leads to a reference to Henry himself—Henry, who, at this point, knows nothing of his parentage—"Poor Henry," as Evergreen calls him.

Then Evergreen is invited into the farmhouse, Dame Ashfield offering him a mug of harvest beer, and promising to tell him "such a story of Mrs. Grundy!"

After that the allusions to Dame Grundy are not quite so numerous, though numerous enough. Again and again we are allowed to see that she is never wholly out of her neighbour's thoughts. What Mrs. Grundy may think of Mrs. Ashfield we are not permitted to know, but to Mrs. Ashfield Mrs. Grundy is evidently an object of unceasing concern.

When Bob Handy comes across Dame Ashfield as she is making lace, and asks her whether that occupation is "a common employment here," she replies:

"Oh, no, sir; nobody can make it in these parts but myself. Mrs. Grundy,

indeed, pretends; but, poor woman, she knows no more of it than you do."

Later on, the Ashfields become aware that Susan is in correspondence with Bob Handy, and are uneasy at the thought of her being the object of that young buck's attention.

"I can't like it a bit," says the farmer.

"Nor I," adds his wife. "If shame should come to the poor child—I say, Tummur, what would Mrs. Grundy say then?"

"Dom Mrs. Grundy! What would my poor wold heart say?"

However, Dame Ashfield is a good soul, after all. When she and her husband espouse the cause of Henry against his uncle, their landlord, the latter threatens to distrain for rent, and, for the time, they have before them the prospect of poverty. Rather, however, than throw Henry over, they are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices, and the Dame is willing even to sell her three silk gowns.

"I'll go to church in a stuff one," she says, "and let Mrs. Grundy turn up her nose as much as she pleases."

And, in so saying, she furnishes Henry with the most decisive proof of her favour and friendship.

The good lady has her reward. The play closes with the certainty of her being able to triumph over Mrs. Grundy in the most crushing and convincing fashion. Bob Handy's intentions, it seems, are honourable. He relinquishes the opportunity of marrying the heiress, Miss Blandford—who falls to the lot of her cousin Henry—and determines to wed Susan Ashfield, whom he truly loves.

"Drabbit," says old Ashfield, "I shall walk in the road all day to see Sue ride by in her own coach."

"You must ride with me, father," says Susan.

"I say, Tummur," observes the Dame, "what will Mrs. Grundy say then?"

In a subsequent scene, where Susan goes out with Sir Abel and his son, the old farmer cries:

"Bless her, how nicely she do trip it away with the gentry."

"And then, Tummur," says the Dame, "think of the wedding."

Ashfield (reflecting): "I declare I shall be just the same ever. Maybe I may buy a smartish bridle, or a silver backstopper, or the like o' that."

The Dame (apart): "And then, when we come out of church, Mrs. Grundy will be standing about there."

Ashfield (apart): "I shall shake hands agreeably wi' all my friends."

The Dame (apart): "Then I just look at her in this manner."

Ashfield (apart): "How dost do, Peter? Ah, Dick! glad to see thee, wi' all my soul!" (Bows to the centre of the stage.)

The Dame (apart): "Then, with a kind of half curtsy, I shall——"

At this point the two come into collision, and the farmer cries:

"What an wold fool thee bee'st, Dame! Come along, and behave pratty, doo'e."

Obviously the play must have made a distinct impression both at its first performance and subsequently. Not otherwise can we account for the extraordinary vogue of the sentence which heads this article. That sentence, practically, is all that remains of the play. Though the piece ran for forty nights on its original production, and though it was afterwards revived with Mathews and Elliston, Munden and Dowton, successively in principal parts, it has gradually faded out of the theatrical repertory, and is now no more seen. Yet a single passage in it has penetrated wherever the English language is spoken, and a figment of the author's brain has been accepted at last as typifying the Spirit of British decorum.

Something of this may be owing to the excellence of the original interpretation of Dame Ashfield. This was supplied by Mrs. Davenport, an actress of high rank in her day. Her impersonation may have struck our grandfathers and grandmothers as so delightful that they could not but repeat to themselves and to one another, in their houses and elsewhere, the query, "What will Mrs. Grundy say?" which she had made so humorously effective, and which consequently has been handed down to the third generation. Or it may simply be that the audiences of 1800 were profoundly impressed by the Dame's truth to life—by the admirable naïveté of her allusions and references to her rival. Anxiety about the thoughts and opinions of one's neighbours was never, perhaps, more happily portrayed than in the person of this quaint outcome of Thomas Morton's fancy.

MISS GARTH.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER V.

"AND you must bring your delightful Italian bandit with you! I positively in-

alist upon it, Jocelyn. The idea of crouching round the hall fire in the dark, and telling ghost stories just because it is New Year's Eve is positively ridiculous. Why should you all go to bed ready to scream with nervousness simply because it is the last day of the year? It is perfect nonsense! You must have a scrimmage at our place instead."

It was Lady Ellis who spoke, as she said good-bye to Jocelyn in the faint dark dawn of the winter's morning. Jocelyn had just refused her invitation to spend New Year's Eve at Graystone Manor, alleging a previous engagement to ghosts as her reason.

"It is really very good of you, Lady Ellis," she said, "but I do so like to have my blood curdled once a year, and——"

"I won't hear another word! We will dance the new year in instead of telling horrid stories of stupid people dressed in white. Your burglar—Lady Carstairs insists he is a burglar—waltzes divinely, and I shall not forgive you if you do not bring him!"

Jocelyn was standing in the great hall saying good-bye to various guests during this speech, and she only gave a little smile that might mean anything. She had told Godfrey Wharton that she meant to be merry that night, and she had kept her word. Flushed and brilliant and beautiful, she had danced till the wintry dawn gleamed faintly in the leaden sky—danced with a gaiety and recklessness that terrified Godfrey, even while it enchanted him. Never to the end of his life did he forget that night. The slender white figure, light as a feather, whirling round the room with feet that seemed winged and that never felt fatigue. When she was dancing with him he tried to get her to stop, to rest, but she only said, without looking at him:

"Don't speak to me—don't look at me! I must not stop. Don't you see that I must keep going on?"

Dalgarno was almost the only man who did not dance with Jocelyn Garth that night. He never went near her; only watched her from afar with a little evil smile playing round his handsome lips. He had his victim so completely in his toils that he could afford to loosen the cords that bound her a little now and then.

"So it is all settled," was Lady Ellis's last remark to Jocelyn as she kissed her in

the great hall; "we will dance the new year in, and I will lend you all the carts and horses I possess to take you back to Boraston Hall again. We will send the servants to bed and have a regular lark. I have quite fallen in love with Mr. Dalgarno."

Jocelyn sank into a chair by the blazing fire when she had said good-bye to the last guest, and stretched out her hands to the ruddy flames. The house-party, in various stages of excitement or limpness, stood about yawning.

"Five o'clock," said Lady Carstairs, who had been longing to hide her bismuth complexion in bed for the last four hours. "My dear Jocelyn, we really must try and get a little sleep; and we are to go to that dear, energetic, Lady Ellis to-morrow, too! Good gracious, how worn out I shall be! Come, girls, get off to bed, if you want to have any complexions left at all."

She went up the stairs at the head of a procession of more or less battered damsels, whose elaborate dresses had been ruthlessly torn by clumsy masculine feet.

Jocelyn remained for a moment absently looking into the fire. She was thinking that to-day was the last day of the old year. What would the new one bring her?

"Are you cold?" asked Dalgarno suddenly, coming up to her, and speaking for the first time that evening.

"No," she answered, without looking at him.

"I thought you were, as you got so close to the fire. But you have colour enough for anything. You danced them all down, Miss Garth. I never saw such spirit."

He spoke in a low voice, looking at her steadily all the time. The colour suddenly left her cheeks and she became very white.

"Do let me advise you to get some rest while you can, Miss Garth," said Godfrey Wharton, coming forward with a glass of wine in his hand. "You look quite worn out."

She drank the wine obediently, and held out her hand in silence to say good-night. Dalgarno held out his too, but she did not even look towards him, and went up the stairs with the heavy, dragging step of one who is suddenly fatigued to the verge of exhaustion.

The two men watched the slim white figure till it disappeared.

"Miss Garth seems a little absent-minded to-night," said Dalgarno, with a half-laugh, looking at Godfrey Wharton. "I wonder why she remembered to shake hands with you and not with me!"

"You had better ask Miss Garth herself if you really wish to know."

"Yes, I think that is a good plan," said Dalgarno mockingly. "I will ask her to-morrow night at Lady Ellis's party, and you shall hear what she says."

"Thank you very much. But I cannot say I take any interest in the answer."

"No! I should have thought you would have, now. A little bird whispered to me that you took the deepest interest in Miss Garth's lightest word."

Godfrey surveyed Dalgarno with disdainful eyes.

"I am not in the habit of discussing my lady friends with a man who is too intoxicated to know what he is saying," he remarked idly.

"What the deuce do you mean? I am no more drunk than you are," cried Dalgarno angrily.

"I must apologise then. I fancied you were in your normal condition. Oblige me by leaving Miss Garth's name out of your conversation in the future. If you are not drunk, there is all the less excuse for you."

He, too, mounted the stairs which Jocelyn had ascended a few minutes ago, and Dalgarno was left alone in the great hall. He stretched his arm above his head with a short, triumphant laugh.

"He is in love with her himself," he said, "and she is mine—mine by the laws of God and man. I have got the whip hand of him there! But let him look to himself in time to come."

The breakfast-table was not patronised at an early hour. Most of the ladies preferred a dainty repast in the seclusion of their own rooms, and the men were in no hurry to leave their well-earned slumbers. Jocelyn was the first to make her appearance.

All the brilliance of despair had died away from her face and eyes. She was no longer defiant, reckless, merry. She looked worn and white, and there were dark marks like bruises under her eyes. She knew that this was her last day of freedom. To-morrow the sword must fall.

But she was as attentive as usual to her guests, and very active in making her arrangements for the evening festivities.

It was no easy matter to drive over twenty guests to Graystone Manor, which was nearly six miles off.

"The brougham and the family coach will hold at least a dozen," said Lady Carstairs, when she at last made her appearance, languid, and yawning, and exceedingly cross. "Then the dog-cart can take four, and I don't see why the Dagloni man can't walk."

"It is raining, aunt," said Jocelyn, with a glance out at the streaming skies and muddy road.

"Oh, is it? Well, I suppose you will have to hire flies, then. Don't put the Dagloni man anywhere near me, Jocelyn. I prefer a dog-cart and a flood to being within a mile of him."

"I think you will find I have arranged everything comfortably," said Jocelyn, with a faint trace of weariness in her tone. "You and the girls and Miss Carrington will have the brougham, and some of the men can go in the family coach. A couple of cabs will bring the other people, no doubt."

"It is a breakneck road from here to the Manor," said Lady Carstairs discontentedly, "and if it is a dark night James will drive us into the Black Pond, I have no doubt. I hope he won't be tipsy."

"I will answer for James's sobriety."

"I wish we were all going to stay at home. It would be much more sensible in my opinion. It is all very well for you young people, I have no doubt; but there is nothing for me to do but eat, and midnight suppers ruin one's digestion and temper."

But when the party set off in their brougham, and their family coach, and their cabs, the fun began again, and Lady Carstairs recovered her good humour. The night was wet and intensely dark, but the brougham was comfortable enough, and the six miles' drive gave her time to get a little nap.

Lady Ellis greeted them with effusion. "You dear good child," she said to Jocelyn, "you are so late that I was half afraid your ghosts had run off with you in revenge for your not having kept your promise to them. We are going to do all sorts of wild things to-night, Lady Carstairs," turning to the Dowager with a pretty little smile. "Lord Ellis declares he wants hide-and-seek and blindman's buff."

Lady Carstairs smiled indulgently.

"So long as you leave me in peace and

plenty," she responded, "you may do what you like."

"And we are to have a wishing circle at twelve o'clock," went on Lady Ellis, "and everything we wish for will come true. I am going to pray for a diamond tiara that I saw in Bond Street the other day, and that Ralph wouldn't buy me."

Lord Ellis, a burly, red-faced, good-humoured man, listened with a smile to his wife's prattle. He struck one as a little heavy for blindman's buff, and too big for hide-and-seek. But in the meantime the music had struck up, and already several couples were whirling round the room.

Lord Ellis offered Jocelyn his arm, and escorted her to a seat.

"I must find you a partner," he said. "My wife has warned me that I am not to dance myself. This room is over the dining-hall, and she says I should go through on to the supper-table."

Dalgarno suddenly appeared at his elbow, and Lord Ellis moved away.

"May I have the pleasure of this dance, Miss Garth?" he asked formally, standing before her.

She looked up at him with denial in her eyes.

"I am not dancing to-night," she answered coldly.

"Why not?"

"I am tired."

He paused for a moment. Then he seated himself by her.

"If you do not mean to dance this evening, neither do I. We will talk to each other instead."

She rose, with a sudden intense gesture of repulsion.

"Anything but that," she murmured bitterly, laying her hand on the arm he offered her.

"You would dance yourself to death rather than be obliged to talk to me for a couple of hours, I know," he answered with a sneer. "Unfortunately I am not Mr. Godfrey Wharton, you see."

He slipped his arm round her slender waist before she had time to reply, and whirled her in among the dancers. It was the first time she had ever waltzed with him.

She felt faint, and weak, and dizzy. Nights of sleeplessness had brought her nerves to a state of tension that the least sound intensified. The music was too loud; the dresses too gay; the scent of the flowers too oppressive. She felt now and then as though she were in the clutch of some terrible nightmare, and she closed

her eyes. But when she opened them it was to find that she was still in Dalgarno's arms; still whirling giddily round the room.

"Are you tired?" he asked her every now and then.

"No," she answered each time, and they danced on in silence. Dalgarno's strong arm clasped her with a firm, easy touch. Lady Ellis was right when she had said that he knew how to waltz.

The music stopped at last, and Jocelyn, almost stupefied, dropped into a seat. Dalgarno stood by, fanning her with an air of proprietorship.

"You had better come into the conservatory," he remarked after a pause. "It is cooler there."

She rose obediently. She seemed to have no will of her own left now; only a dull compliance with the wishes of the inevitable in the shape of Dalgarno. He laughed a little as they sat down together.

"Well, it wasn't so bad after all, was it?" he said. "Our steps suit fairly well, I think."

She did not reply and he went on:

"I can see it has been a little too much for you. I am not going to ask you again to-night. You shall have a last fling if you like, Jocelyn."

He laughed a little again as he said this, and then went on:

"That young Wharton is as great a fool about you as a man can be! But I'm not jealous. You are one of those women whom one can trust, Jocelyn, and I'm not going to spoil sport as long as you keep within bounds."

He rose and strolled away as he spoke, leaving her sitting there white and exhausted. She had not spoken to him during the dance. She did not speak now.

At midnight the wishing circle was formed, and a large ring of laughing people clasped hands round the big bunch of mistletoe that dangled from the ball-room ceiling. Jocelyn took her place as in a dream. She was conscious as she crossed her hands that Godfrey Wharton had possession of her left one. It was only when a hush and silence had fallen on all, when the first silvery strokes of the clocks were chiming on the midnight air, that she found that Dalgarno was at her other side.

The irony of fate! That while her lover, her friend, held one hand in his warm, kind clasp, the other should be possessed by the husband whom she hated!

"The New Year has come!" muttered Dalgarno, stooping low to whisper the words in her ear. "The New Year that we are to spend together, Jocelyn—you and I, and Aveline!"

Godfrey Wharton dropped Miss Garth's hand, and walked away pale to the lips. He also had heard those words.

And now the party became rather riotous. Dancing was abandoned, and childish games were played by grown-up people with all the zest of gayest infancy. Dalgarno was at his merriest. There was a suspicion of too much champagne about him, but he had only drunk enough to make him insolent. Lady Ellis drew in her horns a little. She confided to Jocelyn that the fascinating bandit had rather too Italian manners.

Jocelyn, who was sitting apart, looking white and tired, made no reply, but Lady Carstairs answered for her.

"Italian manners! I believe he came out of a circus or some place of that kind. I expect to see him jump over the tables and chairs in a minute. He is perfectly incomprehensible, and so is Jocelyn. How she ever allowed——"

"Please don't begin again, Aunt Grace. The house-party will be over to-morrow, and then you can say what you like."

Lady Carstairs shrugged her shoulders, but said no more, and soon after the New Year party broke up. Lady Ellis insisted upon Jocelyn driving home in her own pet carriage, which only held two.

"I know that you were crushed to death coming," she said; "and you are as tired as can be. Lady Carstairs——"

But Lady Carstairs was already in the brougham, and the other vehicles had lumbered off into the darkness. Jocelyn and Godfrey Wharton and Dalgarno were left together.

They looked at each other.

"Really this is very awkward," said Lady Ellis. "I think, Mr. Dalgarno, you had better try and find a place in the brougham."

Dalgarno laughed, and showed his white teeth.

"And leave Miss Garth and Mr. Wharton to a pleasant tête-à-tête. No thank you!"

Godfrey made a step forward. His eyes flashed. Jocelyn laid a hand on his arm.

"Give way!" she murmured, "or there will be worse to come!"

"I have obeyed you long enough," he answered in a low voice. "I will not leave you alone with that drunken brute."

"If you two are going to quarrel over poor Miss Garth," said Lady Ellis, coming to the rescue with great tact, "I shall insist on her driving off alone and making you both walk home."

"I am going to drive. Wharton can do as he likes," said Dalgarno determinedly.

He tried to force his way in by Jocelyn's side.

Lord Ellis came forward and shut the carriage door quietly.

"Drive on!" he said to the man; and the little carriage disappeared into the darkness, bearing with it only Jocelyn Garth.

Lord Ellis turned to Dalgarno.

"It is no longer raining," he observed, "and the night is quite warm. I dare say you and Mr. Wharton can find your way home together. I am sorry I cannot offer you——"

Dalgarno broke into an oath.

"How dare you come between me and my wife!" he cried with drunken fury. "Yes—my wife I say! All the world will know of it to-morrow."

"All the world will know that you are either mad or drunk," said Lord Ellis, looking at him.

Dalgarno's handsome features were inflamed with passion.

"Ah! you think so, do you? Well, I can wait! But as for walking home with that fellow," pointing to Godfrey Wharton, "I'll——"

"I have no desire to force my society on you," said Godfrey coldly. "The road to Boraston Hall is straight enough——"

"Straight enough for me to find it without your help," retorted Dalgarno. "I never missed my way in my life, and I am not likely to miss it now. When we meet again you will lower your colours, my fine fellow!"

He stumbled off into the darkness. Godfrey Wharton and Lord Ellis looked at one another.

"Is he drunk or mad?" demanded the latter.

"Both, for aught I know."

"Is it safe to let him go home alone?"

"I don't see how he can miss his way very well. Besides, I shall keep him in sight," said Godfrey Wharton, buttoning his overcoat. "Good night."

"Good night. Keep him in sight at a distance. Such men become dangerous at close quarters."

They parted, and Godfrey Wharton hurried on after Dalgarno. He knew

every inch of the way well. It was a straight road, and it was impossible to miss it—unless, indeed, one turned down one of the two side-lanes that crossed it at intervals. It was not likely that Dalgarno would do that.

But though Godfrey Wharton was only a few minutes later in starting than Jocelyn Garth's husband, he never came up with him that night.

Dalgarno stumbled heavily on, flushed with wine and anger. To think that they had dared to separate him from his lawful wife! To think that they had imagined that he would for one moment have allowed that wife and Godfrey Wharton to drive home together! He flushed more angrily still as he thought of it.

Presently he heard footsteps behind him. Prison life had sharpened his faculties, and he had the acute sense of hearing that the Red Indian possesses. He knew that it was Godfrey Wharton who was following him, and he had no intention of walking home with Godfrey Wharton.

He stood aside until the footsteps had come closer, passed on, and died away in the darkness and the silence of the night.

Then he walked on himself. He thought of Jocelyn—of the riotous, delightful, uproarious life he meant to live in Boraston Hall; of the money he meant to spend; of the horses he meant to ride.

The fumes of the wine he had drunk mounted still more to his head. The still, warm breath of the night had no power to dissipate them. He became bewildered presently and stood still to recollect himself.

"To the left," he said, half-aloud, "yes, I remember turning to the left."

He turned to the left, down a dark, narrow road.

He had not been walking long when his feet touched a more slippery surface. He paused again. Where was he?

On and on he went, until suddenly the slippery surface gave way—crumbled beneath his very feet. Something cold, and dark, and wet crept up about them. He stood still with the sweat of agony chill upon his forehead.

It was the Black Pond!

He tried to retrace his steps, but the treacherous ice, only partially thawed, gave way at every turn.

The cold, dark, still water crept further up—up to his knees now. His eyes, straining in the pall-like darkness, almost burst from their sockets. Oh, Heaven, for help!

A strangled, agonised cry, hardly human in its shrill anguish, rang upon the silent air. At the same time Dalgarno heard, borne to him on the soft wind, the silvery chimes that welcomed the New Year!

With a stifled cry, with hands cut and bleeding, through catching at the sharp, ragged edges of the ice, he sank lower—lower still! A numbed feeling came over him. In a few minutes he had ceased even to struggle, and the dark waters of the Black Pond closed silently over Jocelyn Garth's husband.

He was brought home, after much search—a ghastly, dripping figure with distorted features, and cut and bleeding hands—and buried in the churchyard where the Garths had been at rest for generations. The funeral took place from Boraston Hall itself.

Dead, Jocelyn Garth acknowledged his rights, as she would never have done of her own free will had he lived. All the world now knew that Adolphe Dalgarno had been her husband.

"I knew he was something very disagreeable the moment I set eyes on him," said Lady Carstairs by way of sympathising with her niece, "but I never thought, Jocelyn, that he was ever anything as bad as that."

But Jocelyn's heart was more tender to him dead than it could ever have been alive. Her mind wandered back to the days when he had first called her wife. She had loved him then—and he had been the father of her child.

Aveline has a dim recollection of a tall, dark, handsome man who came to her one day in her nursery, and promised her all sorts of fairy things if she would come and live with him. But sometimes now she thinks it must have been all a dream, as she looks up into Godfrey Wharton's clear blue eyes, and calls him by the name of "father."

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MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "*Joan Vellacot*," "*A Woman of Forty*," "*Kestell of Greystone*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII. LUCK TURNS.

AFTER this, Penzie's smiles came more readily. She went out a great deal, but it was only when she met Forster Bethune that she cared about her gaieties. The world called her proud, but asked her all the more to join in its amusements.

She received several offers, which she refused after referring them to her uncle, who invariably found that the lovers were not rich enough. Penelope did not trouble herself at all about them. Her uncle decided for her, and she was not inclined to remonstrate. In truth the admirers did not give her any uneasiness. Mrs. Todd, who guessed the truth, dared not question Miss Winkell; there being something about her which stopped even that loquacious lady. Society, however, said that the Princess was much more agreeable than she had been at first. She managed to be charming, as well as beautiful, having at last learnt the secret of speaking much and meaning little. At first she was impatient of it all, now she was sorry as the days passed away, especially if she had not met Forster Bethune. She was also very friendly with Philip Gillbanks, and she was constantly meeting him. In fact he seemed to know by intuition where she would be found, and by some means or other he would be there. They talked chiefly about Forster and his doings, or rather Philip talked and she smiled and listened. Philip believed that she was

interested in hearing about the work which occupied the friends, and he even told Forster that the Princess was at heart one of his disciples. This soon brought Forster to her side, and then Penzie's whole countenance changed, though no one noticed it. The very sound of his voice brought strange enchantment. She did not call her feeling by any name, and she did not argue about it. She did not even know that what she felt was the sweet folly called love, and Forster himself did not guess why he was glad when she took such a decided interest in his various hobbies. But he made his mother ask the Winskells to dinner, so that Adela should make friends with the beautiful Princess.

Penelope gave up a dance at Lord Farrant's in order to go to the Bethunes' dinner-party, much to Mrs. Todd's surprise, but Penzie instantly declared that her uncle liked dinner-parties, and this served as an excuse.

On that evening she took a long time over her toilet, though she was not usually very anxious about her appearance. She tried on two dresses before she could decide which suited her best. Never before in all her life had Penzie been consciously vain.

When she came downstairs ready dressed, Mrs. Todd exclaimed:

"I declare, Miss Winkell, you are the only person who could look well in that pale brown dress, but it really suits you; only would not your blue silk be more suitable for the occasion?"

"The Bethunes are very simple people," said Penelope; "they are not like the rest of society, who look at people's clothes before they look at their faces."

"I must say I like well-dressed women. It's all very well for people who are rich

to go about looking dowdy, but it doesn't do to be shabby when you have a limited income."

Mrs. Todd was going to dine with some friends of hers, as Penelope did not require her. The widow declared privately to them that she was delighted to be free of the Princess.

"She is very beautiful, very calm, and really gracious. She is clever, too, but she has no heart," said Mrs. Todd to an old friend, who answered candidly :

"You were not troubled with too much heart yourself, Louisa."

"Oh, well! I never pretended that I wished to be poor, but this strange girl actually told me she was going to marry for money."

In the meanwhile Penelope was happily awaiting her uncle, who returned rather late to dress for the dinner-party.

When he entered she noticed a shade of gravity on his usually beaming countenance.

"What is the matter, uncle dear? We are alone, and for a few hours we shall be happy."

He held her at arms' length and smiled.

"The matter is that I have kept you waiting, and the Bethunes will be impatient."

Penelope did not say more; indeed, after the short drive was over; she forgot her momentary anxiety—especially as she suddenly found herself in the midst of the Bethunes, with Forster himself talking to her. His mother and his sisters welcomed her with the pleasant courtesy which is rare in society, but which was habitual to them.

"We wanted you to ourselves, so Forster said we need not have a real party. There are only his friend Mr. Gillbanks and one or two more coming." This was Adela's remark, whilst Mrs. Bethune added :

"Forster says you are very sympathetic about his plans. It is very good of you, I'm sure. Of course we like his poor dear old people. His cousins, the Rookwoods, don't approve of them; but you see they don't hear him talk about them as much as we do."

"There is Mr. Gillbanks, yes, and there are the Dewberys. You are to sit between Forster and his friend so that they may make sure of your conversion! Mother, don't forget that General Dewbery takes you in. Now and then mother seizes the arm of the wrong man, and we have to part them by force."

Penelope found everything delightful. The Bethunes realised in their home life

all that she naturally appreciated, and all that she had learnt to appreciate since she had known them. Philip's sallies brought out Forster's clever retorts and his greater idealism. Philip was ever ready to efface himself before Forster's more sparkling intellect, and it was evidently because of this that he received Penelope's frequent smiles. Forster did not insist on airing his views because they were his views, but simply because his whole soul was in his cause and he spoke out of the abundance of his heart.

After dinner Mary Bethune was induced to play, and this was almost a revelation to the Princess, whose music had no more art in it than that given her by nature, a true ear, and a sweet voice.

This evening she dimly realised the happiness of the Bethunes' family life. She had never seen anything like it before, and it came to her like a revelation of something great, pure, and beautiful—something she had never enjoyed herself, but of which Forster Bethune was really worthy.

"I have no talent," she said during the evening to Adela, who was fascinated by her beauty. "Your sister is a wonderful musician."

"You can inspire musicians," was the answer, "that is far better. Forster said the other day that the club-men to whom you spoke are still talking about you."

Penelope did not reply; she was thinking of Forster, and wondering vaguely whether he really cared about anything beyond his poor people.

Mr. Bethune and the Duke were very happy recalling old friends; everybody was merry and amusing with that merriment that comes of guilelessness, and which cannot be counterfeited.

Penelope was in a sweet dream, and listened with a smile on her lips when Dora joined in the conversation.

"You know we are all rather stupid about Forster, but really it is Mr. Gillbanks who keeps the machinery oiled. Now and then Forster does think of impossible things."

"But he says that Forster is a splendid general and pioneer," put in Adela.

"I am sure he is," murmured Penelope, looking across the room to where Forster was engaged in eager conversation with her uncle, Philip standing close beside him. When it was time to go Penelope was sorry, though usually she was glad that her evening parties were over. She had wandered into a pleasant fairyland

of home happiness such as she had never before experienced, and for a time she had forgotten her life object. These people were not rich, but they were happy. Penelope looked at the picture as a London child might gaze at green fields or at vast forests for the first time in its life. When they were in the hall, and her uncle was talking to Philip Gillbanks, Forster stood close beside her, and suddenly he paused in a brilliant description of a thieves' lodging-house. Penelope looked up to see the reason of his pause, and, as their eyes met, both smiled.

"I stopped because the contrast between you standing here and the sight I have seen to-day in that den came over me so forcibly," he said.

"Does not the contrast between yourself and them strike you?" she asked with a sigh.

"No. I never have time to think of it. Besides, what is the difference? Merely one of accident of birth."

"But that is such a vast difference, it is everything."

"When you had learnt to care about these people as human beings you would forget it too."

"Oh, no. I don't think I should."

"I'm sure you would," he said simply. "It is because you have never thought about it. In the next generation women will play an important part in all public affairs; then we shall expect them to be real helpers."

"A woman can do so little," said the Princess humbly. She was softened, feeling that she, too, could be another woman if Forster Bethune wished her to change.

"I shall call to-morrow, if I may, and show you some plans Gillbanks has had prepared for us. We want to attach a dwelling house to our club-room, where ladies will come and spend some time. We don't want them to do much, but just to lead their quiet lives there, and to let the poor men see something beautiful. They do not realise that a woman's greatest power lies in being herself."

"They might be disappointed if they knew more of us; but do come."

For one moment he kept hold of her hand, and Penzie felt a thrill of happiness.

"Thank you," he said; "I shall come. You are very good."

Philip came up to her at this moment, and his face said more than his words

when he heard that Forster had promised to show her the plans. He fancied she was already a firm disciple.

"May we call it the Palace?" he asked. "It will remind me of my first visit to you."

"No," said Forster quickly. "Gin is the only idea that our people have in connection with a palace. The Princess must live there first to make them change their ideas."

Penelope and the Duke drove home in silence. She was so full of her own thoughts that she did not notice his unusual silence. When they reached home the Duke gently drew Penzie into the drawing-room.

"Come in here, child, I want to talk to you; we must soon be going home again."

Penzie started a little as she stood near the window and gazed at the cold moonlight. How glad she would have been to have heard this some time ago; now it seemed merely to give her pain.

"But, uncle, we cannot go before——"

She paused, unable as formerly to talk openly about the important topic.

"I have not quite calculated all our plans, Penzie; but beyond this week we must not stay."

Penzie knew then what he meant.

"Oh, uncle, the expense you mean. I had almost forgotten."

"I have not been quite so fortunate as I was at first; but we have succeeded, child, we have met the world on its own ground, and no one has known we are beggars."

Penzie lifted her head proudly.

"No one has even guessed it. Only, how you managed to hide it has been a mystery to me."

"Has it?" The Duke touched the girl's fair cheek and smiled. "I meant it to be a mystery, but you shall know all to-morrow. You have a right to know that you have succeeded."

"Succeeded?" murmured Penelope, a cold chill creeping into her heart.

"Yes, child, you were bound to do that, only I was hoping for better things, and I waited."

"I have done as you told me; I refused those foolish offers."

"Yes, yes, they were mere windbags. Now you must finish your task. Are you still of the same mind?"

"Yes, quite of the same mind," said Penzie in a low voice, because she doubted her own words.

"You will act, Penzie, and say nothing. You have always done that."

Penzie slowly raised her eyes to the moon swept by clouds. Why was a chilly feeling creeping over her? Before she had been quite ready. She was still and she would be perfectly obedient.

"Of course I shall. Tell me."

"To-morrow, child, to-morrow. Good night, my Princess."

CHAPTER XIII. THE END OF THE QUEST.

PENELOPE was alone in her room. The end to which she had always looked forward with such a steady gaze was nearly reached, but she was still to walk blindfold; she was not to see it till the next day. All at once she started, and her face was diffused with a hot blush.

Forster had said he would come! It was Forster that her uncle meant. He loved her, and she loved him. That was the solution of the riddle, and through her duty had come her happiness—a new, strange happiness which she had never known or understood before. All the mysteries of life seemed unfolded before her; all that was perfect and beautiful on earth had come to her. This was the secret of the poets—the meaning of so much that she had read, but which her proud nature had never before understood.

She knelt down by the arm-chair and spoke the word softly: "Forster, Forster." She could be humble for his sake; she would do as he bade her; she would go among his poor people, the people he loved, and she would learn their ways, and he would teach her how she could help them—she and Forster together. Then her mind flew back to the family circle she had just left, full of mutual trust and confidence. That was all new to her, strange and beautiful. Her love for her uncle was not at all like this. She had loved him because he had taught her and cared for her, but it was the love of a devoted pupil more than the love of a child. In the future she would have that family life to help her. Forster's people would be her people. They must teach her how to help him, who thought so little about himself. She would be proud to be his disciple and to follow him. The old home would be restored by one who would care for it because it was her home, and—

Before this Penelope Winakell had been merely the fair temple of an idea; she had not perfectly developed. This

night, as she rested her head against her arm, she felt that she was changed, that her heart of stern resolve was taken from her, and that instead she received the heart of a woman, strong and steadfast in love. She laughed softly at her former self. The ideal had been grand. She did not wish it altered; but this state of existence was far grander.

She loved. She loved Forster, and he was worthy of being loved.

She did not understand him yet; he differed from her as much as day from night; but she recognised something in him that was superior to anything she had ever known. Men had seemed to her early experience beings of meaner substance than herself, except her uncle, who was her master. She had been quite wrong, for now she felt that she knew a man incapable of base ideas or of anything vile. Women were really the inferior beings, and she, a foolish girl, had encouraged her pride because her ignorance had been great. In future she would try to learn the right estimate in which men and women should be held. She had much to learn, but now her eyes were open. The great world was made up of men and women, in whom Forster believed because they were his fellow-creatures. To her it was a wonderful and startling creed, but it was his creed, and she would ask him to teach her.

The night crept on, but still Penelope sat there, dreaming through a world of happiness of which she could only seize the central idea. She loved, and was loved. She knew it now, that secret which the world kept so safely secured from the reach of meaner natures. She had never understood it before. It was utterly different from anything she had ever experienced or imagined.

Then at last she fell asleep just where she was, and the sunlight came to kiss her awake, and, startled, she jumped up and laughed as she had never laughed before.

Life was beautiful, and the sun was beautiful, and London was a fairy home of delight, but she must hide everything from Mrs. Todd. Mrs. Todd! Penelope was sure she had never loved and that she knew nothing about it. That was why she was so unsympathetic and so very uninteresting.

She dressed herself hastily and hid all traces of having kept such a long vigil. She was strong and not easily tired, so, with a smile on her face, she ran downstairs.

Mrs. Todd was alone in the dining-room. "Where is uncle?" Penelope exclaimed, for he always breakfasted with them.

"He begged me to tell you that he was called away on business, but that he would be in before luncheon to make up for his early disappearance."

Penelope was a little disappointed, but she said nothing.

"My dear Miss Winskell, you missed a delightful ball last night, for I went to the Farrante's after all. I found my friends were going, so I ran home to dress, and I assure you it was a perfect dance. But every one was angry at your non-appearance. One lady told me that she knew her brother had come on purpose to be introduced to the belle of the season."

Penelope raised her head in her usual haughty manner.

"I know enough of society now to know what it means, and indeed I was glad to avoid a crowded dance."

"The Bethunes are dear, eccentric people; still, they are not very lively when compared with the Farrante's."

Penzie never argued a point with her chaperon. She busied herself with the tea, and felt herself slipping back into thought, which was hardly civil to Mrs. Todd.

"What made the dance more amusing was the fact of Mrs. McIntyre's presence. She never comes with her husband now. They say the two have agreed never to appear together."

"Why do they do that?" said Penzie absently.

"Dear, innocent Miss Winskell, really you ask delightful questions. She is a very modern lady, and has always a young man dangling after her. As to the husband, well, they came to words on the subject of a girl he admires immensely."

"It is very stupid of them to give cause for the senseless gossip of their neighbours."

"Senseless gossip! When people who are married behave like this, the world talks of course, but it's my belief that the world would be very unhappy if no one gave them the chance of gossiping."

"I should be too proud to show what I felt."

"You indeed! I quite imagine that you would say nothing, but few are as brave as you are. I was not at all happily married, but I took care to let every one know it. It was some comfort. If I had held my peace I should have received no sympathy, perhaps only blame."

"Our family has always been taught to suffer in silence."

"It never pays, though it looks well. Will you come to see Tuffnell's pictures this morning? Every one is talking of them; it is the fashionable topic."

"I think I will stay indoors till luncheon time, my uncle may come in early; but don't let me hinder you. I should like to be alone this morning. I really want a rest."

"I am going to the dressmaker, and I shall enquire about your dress for the Barristers' Ball."

"Thank you," said Penzie absently. She was thinking of something quite different.

She was restless this morning, though she tried to occupy herself with writing to her father, very much doubting if he would ever read the letter; then she looked out of the window, wondering why her uncle did not return; and lastly she felt a deep blush overspread her face when she heard a ring at the door. Was it Forster Bethune? and what had he come to say? The past and the future seemed to be blotted out; she was like one in a dream who does not know what will come next, but is passively prepared for whatever happens.

When Forster was really introduced, she felt that it was quite natural, and that she had long been expecting him. Her heart gave a bound of joy.

"I am so glad you have not gone out yet," he said simply. "I have brought the plans for you to see. May I sit down?"

They had both been standing near the window. Penelope sat down with unusual obedience on her part. She had never before felt that she must obey any one except her uncle. Forster drew some papers out of his pocket and began unfolding them, then suddenly he paused and looked at the beautiful face before him.

"I should like to tell you of a dream I had. I fancied that you would be a great power among your fellow-creatures; that your beauty would be a very visible picture to them, showing them all that is good and pure; and that if you would join us in the fight against sordid humanity, together we might realise great things."

"How could I?" said Penzie almost under her breath.

"You would soon recognise the impossibility of caring about society, the world,

or whatever you call it, when once you had taken in the oneness of humanity. It would become as impossible to you to spend—" he paused and smiled—one of those smiles which spurred on others to self-sacrifice—"money on your dress that was not absolutely necessary. You would reject luxury for love of those whose mental capacity had not reached your own level. Your title of Princess, to be real, must be earned among your village brothers and sisters. You must be their Princess. Will you do all this? I know you are capable of great things."

"Yes, yes, I could do it," said Penzie, suddenly rising and standing near the window, where the scent of mignonette was wafted in upon the warm breeze.

"I knew you could. I want you for this work, but as it is useless to begin if you turn back, you must not answer at once."

Penzie looked at him now. Was it only the work he meant? He was close beside her, and took her unresisting hand.

"Penelope—it is a name which means so much. I would give you all I can give to a woman, a part of my life's work. A man's wife is the crown to his labour; one with him and with his thoughts. I would never degrade your beautiful womanhood by making you a man's plaything, Penelope. You are a queen by right of your womanhood, having inherited all that your sisters are striving still to gain."

It was a very strange courtship, but Penelope did not think so, and did not notice its unreality. Her heart had never before been touched, and all Forster's words were to her as the words of a prophet.

"But your money," she said slowly; "could you give me that?"

Forster misunderstood her.

"Yes, yes, of course. You would have as much right as I have myself to say how it should be spent. Simplicity is a man's greatest help to a nobler life. To live without money is to live twice."

Penelope liked this ideal; it suited her present frame of mind. But she felt that she must make it plain that if she lived in poverty, her husband's money must belong to her family. She had never believed it possible that she should have love as well. She had not known the meaning of the word as she knew it now. The revelation had come to her so suddenly that it seemed to alter her whole nature, and she shrank from being

more explicit in her words. She was sure that Forster would have enough for the needs of the Winkell estate, if they themselves lived simply, as he suggested. Indeed, she had been used to nothing else, and it was only since her present visit that the manners and customs of the rich had become familiar to her. She had not rebelled, because she had believed that her own future would be certainly cast in the same mould; but Forster had opened out a new view of things, and that view included poverty.

The dream was beautiful; all the more so that it had developed itself like a wondrous flower which expands in a night, and is only perfected at sunrise.

She held out her hand to him shyly, and he took it, though he did not try to kiss her, but only held her hand firmly clasped.

A hansom drove rapidly to the door, and Penzie started.

"That is my uncle," she said. "Wait a few moments. I will go and meet him."

She walked slowly from the room, and met the Duke just entering the library.

"Penelope, come in here a moment, child. Who is there?" he asked, noticing a man's hat.

"Mr. Bethune."

"Ah!" He shut the library door, and took both her hands. "Penzie, my dear child, the luck is turned. We must leave London as soon as possible."

"The luck! What luck?"

"Mine; but it is of no consequence. My dear child, I have found your future husband."

Penzie blushed for the first time at this word.

"I know. I am ready to obey you, uncle. You know I am."

"I know; and really, considering all things, it's not bad. I have looked into all the affairs, and really Phillip Gillbanks's fortune is as safe as the Bank of England."

Penzie repeated very slowly: "Phillip Gillbanks?"

"Yes, his father is a millionaire."

THE SWEETS OF POPULARITY.

It may be doubted whether men crave popularity or wealth the more. True, the race for hard cash is about the most striking feature of life as we live it nowadays; but then what is at the back of that desire to be rich that seems innate in us

all? Is it a craving merely for beds of cedar down, obsequious domestics, champagne every day, and carriages to drive about town in? Or is it the deep-ingrained yearning to make a large figure among one's contemporaries, to shine as a philanthropist or a politician, to become a byword, in fact, and a theme for newspaper comments?

Well, there is no denying that a good many of us have low, sensual ideas; and think of money as little better than the safest possible vehicle to carry us to domestic bliss and luxurious ease. Nevertheless, if you take three men, sound in body and mind, and of the average moral calibre, methinks two of the three would rate pounds, shillings, and pence for their effect in promoting the joys of the heart and the head, rather than of the stomach and the senses in general.

Mark at how early an age the appetite shows in us. A man need not be a father to know that a child is seldom so well pleased as when he is the nucleus of an admiring throng. I have seen a baby in arms as it were convulsed into ecstasy because a couple of other mothers had joined its own mother in apparent worship of its first budding tooth. Perhaps there was pain at the root of the tooth just at the time. If so, the pain was completely outmatched by the pleasure of being the butt of a little eulogistic notice.

One's first spell of school-days hurries the appetite smartly into a passion. Every school has its divinity, and his sway is often infinite in its own little sphere. I remember well how I, for one, revered the youth whose personality ruled the roost in the dormitory of the school to which I was promoted from the leading-strings of nurses. He was notable chiefly for an imperative manner, a fine vocabulary in abuse of the masters over us, a loud voice, a big body, and an amazing coolness in emergencies. When all's said, he had the making of a great man in him—at least, I fondly fancy so. But he has not come to the front among us bigger boys, though years back he had but to say "Do this," and it was done immediately.

He seemed to have a glorious career—in the dormitory. Yet perhaps he never fully appreciated the blessings that fortune had wreathed about his brow. He was then, I expect, like a strong man who has never ailed: quite unconscious of the value of health. Probably, from babyhood upwards he had played the part of magnet—alluring

otherst though himself unmoved. Out of question he would have been astonished if one day all we youngsters had, by conspiracy, joined in neglecting him, and refused him his meed of admiration by deeds, words, and looks. The experience might have been as good for him as a bout of mild illness for the man who takes his health as a matter of course.

I am told that girls are much more susceptible to praise and reverential treatment even than boys. It seems hardly credible, but my informant—the mother of five girls and four boys—is in a good position to know. Certainly I have watched with interest how a knot of little maids will hang round one of their party, and worship her most palpably; and how her eyes have sparkled with delight in the homage. And I have seen with pain the sullen, lugubrious face of the girl whom none of her companions want to have anything to do with out of school hours, and the glances of envy with which she has acknowledged the superiority of the popular girl.

It is, perhaps, hard even for the accomplished coquette to say why she practises those peculiar aptitudes she has from Nature. I suppose, however, the truth of the matter is that she likes to be liked—thus differing not much from the rest of us. Yet if she is wise she would do well early in her decline to borrow a little from the pessimists, and convince herself of the fleeting nature of all mundane pleasures, and their insufficiency. She may thus both eat her cake and have it.

But it is among adult men that the craze for popularity is at its strongest. Whether in the world of letters, of sport or politics, popularity at all cost seems the goal aimed at.

There is in my town a very able lawyer, still in the prime of life. At twenty-five he was recognised in the district as a coming power—local or national, as he pleased. He was familiar with platforms, and he cut a bold figure on them. He was handsome, hail-fellow-well-met, and with a small private income. He was under thirty when he was elected Mayor of the borough, and exercised nominal rule over a hundred thousand persons. For the next ten years he lived and flourished under the sunshine of unvarying success. Every one acknowledged his abilities, latent and declared; it only remained for him to do credit to his admirers by some downright performance. But he seems to have preferred the glamour

of mere popularity to aught else. This spoiled him, and nowadays, though, as I have said, still but middle-aged, people look at him as if he were a comely wreck on a sandy shore. He drinks daily at the club about three times as much as he can carry with grace, and spends probably twice as much money annually as he earns. As may be imagined, he is not an ideal husband. His wife and he disagree vigorously, and his children are about as headstrong as possible.

It is not a very edifying spectacle to see two professional pugilists pounding away at each other for a championship. The belt or the purse they are struggling for, however, may, without exaggeration, be rated as an inferior lure to the regard the winner will obtain from such of the world as is interested in boxing feats. The judge hands the winner his prize with a few set words of congratulation. But those who are more nearly touched by his success crowd round him, salute him as "good old Joe!" or "good old Peter!" smile on him eye to eye, and perhaps lift him shoulder high and proclaim him, for the nonce at any rate, an uncrowned king. These are the best moments of his lifetime—assuming, of course, that his conscience does not charge him with obtaining his victory by unlawful conduct.

As a rule, sad to say, it seems as if those who are so impatient to become popular lose some of their moral sense. They consecrate themselves to the one idea. Whatever stands in the way of their service must either be overridden or disregarded. These words have been imputed to Lord Nelson: "Never mind the justice or the impudence, only let me succeed." They may be true or false in their application, but they are a capital illustration of the present argument. It is a case of hit or miss, heads or tails. The recklessness may win glory or result in ruin. One must take one's chance: the game here is worth the candle. As the mother of old exhorted her son:

Success shall be in thy courser tall,
Success in thyself, which is best of all,
Success in thy hand, success in thy foot,
In struggle with man, in battle with brute.

Success and popularity may more often than not be read as synonymous terms.

It is a pity that the laurels which crown the popular man should be prone to wither so quickly. But it cannot be helped. The thing to do is to accept them with a brisk self-assurance of their fragility, and to

hang them as relics in one's treasure-house even ere the leaves have lost their suppleness. The man who is the lion of a day may, if he will, have a very fair time indeed while the day lasts. Only, he must not get fancying that it is going to be a day of eternal duration.

In literature and art popularity is nearly everything. Without it the loaves and fishes will not be of the best and freshest. There is, of course, a certain gratification—acute in proportion to the genius—in imaginative work for its own sake. But when the spell of sweet absorption is over, and it is remembered that others hold but a mean opinion, if an opinion at all, about the achievements that seem all in all to the worker, then come the pangs that wait upon neglect.

A first book is to its author pretty much, I should suppose, what her first baby is to the young mother. "How in the world will it turn out?" he asks himself, even as the proud young mamma wonders about her little unresponsive trophy. If popularity comes it is like inches to the statue. It is a test to the individual, and no mistake. His disposition will have none more potent to face in three score years and ten. Even misfortunes are easier to bear with dignity or without loss of precious traits of character. "Another publisher!" he gets into the habit of exclaiming when his bell sounds and a visitor is heard approaching.

It is delightful to be wooed by the very persons whom of old the author has, with great reluctance, trained himself to woo. The legends of Grub Street do not prepare us for any marked show of prudence or tact in the author who, of a sudden, leaps to the top of the tree of fame. Yet, nowadays, our knights and esquires of the pen enjoy their delirium sagely, and discount their celebrity with a shrewdness worthy of the Hebrews. If publishers urge them to write to order, they book the undertaking. Thus one brilliant volume may be the forerunner of a score of moderate and bad books. The age is tolerably philosophic, though it does live at a mad pace. Our men of letters, who are in a sense its embodiment, may be trusted not to lose their heads when the world startles them with the glad cry, "Well done!"

Few authors, however, can keep their popularity as our master singers keep their voices and, therefore, their popularity. Upon the whole, our leading sopranos and tenors and our brilliant actors and actresses seem to have the best of life—if popularity.

unqualified, be the test. It is, of course, a fine thing to be the Premier of a great nation, and be cheered and entreated to make little speeches even at railway stations in the middle of a journey. But a Premier has to do battle every minute of the day for his fame. He is vilified as a matter of course. He makes false steps which bring upon him indescribable obloquy and remorse, and often he is worsted in the fray, and has to hang his head and accept hootings and abuse where, not long ago, he was presented with gold boxes and as much mob-praise as he could bear without getting his ear-drum split.

Not so those who sing to and act before us. They go from triumph to triumph, and taste the sweets of their successes like no other people. When they have colds in their throats they withhold their presence—at least if they are wise. The public, having established the precedent of applauding them, never afterwards fails to applaud them. Theirs is a career of sunshine—and cheques.

This, too, must be trying to the personality, though perhaps less so than most forms of emphatic success, since the superiority of a great singer or actor, once acknowledged, is seldom subsequently called in question. Miss Bremer tells a pretty story of the Swedish nightingale which may be repeated here. "I asked Jenny of what she thought on a certain night in the midst of her greatest success, and the simple reply was: 'I remembered that I had forgotten in the morning to sew a string on my cloak.'" Not every "prima donna" is as well endowed with sweet simplicity as was Jenny Lind, yet most of them in time wear their fame as easily as an old and cherished mantle.

There is something ludicrous about the enthusiasm a leading politician excites in the mob whose mouthpiece he claims to be; and something almost pathetic, too. Time after time I have heard statesmen received by the crowd whom they have risen to address, with that monotonous hymn, "For he's a jolly good fellow!" The politician does not always, or indeed often, look like "a jolly good fellow." He is too much in earnest to be that. And, moreover, there is frequently a little twitching of the lips that tells how the canticle jars on him. He, if any one, knows how fickle is the popular voice on whose acclaiming he depends. Still, he may well be excused if for the moment he dismisses sober reason

to the background, and rejoices in the present popularity that is his.

Never indeed was political prominence more acknowledged than now. From the time a man begins to be cartooned in the papers, he may be deemed a statesman. Thenceforward he is public property, and treated as such. It depends wholly on the measure of his sensibility whether he finds his position pleasant and stimulating, or purgatorial. In the latter case we may at once assume that Nature meant him to seek popularity in another of the various domains she so kindly opens to us as incentives to eager living.

A man's standing towards his contemporaries is never really known until he is dead. It is when he is represented by a vacuum that the estimate of his popularity or the contrary may be relied upon. Obituary notices are not the most credible of newspaper paragraphs, yet they, too, have their value. It is the same with epitaphs. The phrase, "beloved and respected by all who knew him," is the proudest posthumous comment a man can excite. But the frequency of its use makes one a little suspicious of it. One is often irreverent enough to fancy that could the dust beneath the tombstone thus inscribed become reanimated and call on the composers of the inscription, their love would not prove good for much. Perhaps even they would refuse the resuscitated corpse a hearing, and have him shown to the door without delay. One never knows.

Of tombstone praise, the most reasonable extant seems to be that in the epitaph of a man in Bedfordshire, which so impressed Count Beust one day: "He was as honest as is consistent with the weakness of human nature." I give it from memory, sure only that I have not marred its spirit. This is not suggestive of a high degree of popularity, but it gives us some solid ground to build upon.

BLACKPOOL.

BLACKPOOL is to the hard-working folk of the large towns of Lancashire what Brighton is to the moneyed classes of the metropolis. This gives it a character all its own. There is not a watering-place in the United Kingdom to compare with it in this respect. The people you meet on the sands of Blackpool are generally of the kind who proclaim, in their own particular dialect, that they mean to have "a high

old time;" and they generally manage to get it.

In itself, it is not a very beautiful town. It has what may, by courtesy, be termed cliffs at its north end. But really they are only banks of gravel, and the omnivorous Irish Sea is fast eating them away. For two miles a line of buildings faces the water—hotels, shops, and lodging-houses—and at exceptional holiday times this extensive promenade is thick with holiday-makers not at all remarkable for the refinement of their attire. This admirable parade apart, Blackpool is uninteresting. True, there are sand-heaps on "ocean's marge" to the south, and very attractive these are to the children, who may be seen rolling down them, and to the children's parents, who sit in demure enjoyment upon them, watching their offsprings' antics, and inhaling the pure air at the same time. There are also two piers, which, in blustering weather, offer your hat every facility for a marine excursion. And there are donkeys on the sands when the tide is out, and boats with nice white sails alluringly at hand when the tide is in. Bands, too, are to be heard; there is an aquarium, and there is a winter garden, and there soon will be an Eiffel Tower. All these last, however, as artificial aids, need not be insisted on in the catalogue of the Lancashire watering-place's charms. One and all they are well balanced, to the man who wishes his company to be select, by the exceedingly plebeian character of the visitors.

But such a man is not made to appreciate Blackpool—or, indeed, the miscellaneous nature of life itself. To the average person of an open mind this very feature is the one that most recommends the town to notice. What can be more cheerful to the humanitarian than the consciousness that these young sparks in straw hats and deerstalkers, with yellow shoes to their feet, and jewelled rings to their hands—who crowd the promenade from morn to midnight—are hard-working artisans when they are at home? It is the same with the feathered and flounced damsels, who laugh so loudly as they take the ozone to their lungs. They are factory girls for about three hundred days in the year. Modern progress and the railway companies enable them all, periodically, thus to wrap themselves round with the sweet illusions of temporal greatness. There is not a pin to choose between the self-consequence of these youthful tourists at Blackpool, and that of their betters in worldly rank at a church

parade in Rotten Row. There is a difference in tone, but this is of the subtle kind that need not be recognised.

Blackpool is the most vulgar seaside resort in the country, and therefore one of the most important, prosperous, and remarkable. Probably no municipality is more alive. Everything that can be done to please the people is done here. When the Eiffel Tower is completed the town will have a feather in its cap which is sure to benefit it for a spell. A concert hall to hold two thousand people is being built on one of its piers. It cannot yet boast of model lodging-houses like those in Drury Lane and elsewhere; but, doubtless, they too will come, so that even the crossing-sweepers of Manchester may run hither for a holiday at the least possible expenditure. In fact, it seems destined to do for the bodies of the working classes of the north what the cheap weekly scissors-and-paste journals of the land have, for the last ten years or so, done for their minds. Just as the ordinary artisan nowadays hardly thinks of travelling fifty miles by railway without buying a paper that shall assure his widow and children one hundred pounds or one thousand pounds in case of his death by accident, so in the future, it may be, no Lancashire working man will be content to live through the year without a change at Blackpool.

We would not argue that none but the poor come to this fairy godmother of watering-places. The terms of the ladies who run boarding-houses on the parade are too high for the very poor—unless, indeed, they visit here, as some seem to do, on the co-operative system. But no higher stratum than that of the middle class is tapped by the seductions of Blackpool's advertisements. Fathers with large families frequent these breezy lodging-houses, the façades of which are astonishingly provided with windows. It is deeply instructive—on the population question—to walk up or down the parade in the season and mark the extraordinary masses of heads which show at each bow window. You have, of course, the father and mother—honest, wrinkled persons, taking the ease they have so hardly earned—and behind them children and young men and women of a variety of ages between five-and-twenty and five. For such people are these lodging-houses both a blessing and a necessity. One may suppose that an exact calculation of the cost

of residence here per head on these conditions would prove that even as the air of Blackpool declares it "the sick man's physician," so its comparative cheapness announces it "the poor man's friend." For the more opulent there are hotels and hydropathic establishments enough; but though nothing can be said against them, they are distinctly of a much lower order than their fellows at the fashionable resorts of the south coast.

The town has had a singularly rapid rise, even for a watering-place that "supplies a want." People who yearn to make fortunes in landed estates need not leave England for the quest. Blackpool is one instance in many of the truth. Forty years ago green fields stretched to the sands which are now fringed with houses of a rather mellow appearance. Forty years hence, we can scarcely doubt, the town will have trebled its area, and the distance between its boundaries and those of that very different little gem of a place, St. Anne-by-the-Sea—famous for its links—will have shrunk almost to nothingness. With improved train services Blackpool's fortunes must grow. As it is, the people who live here and go daily during the week into Manchester—a ride of an hour and a half each way—are numbered by scores. There is, of course, no question as to the superiority of Blackpool's air to that of Manchester. Why, in the near future, may not the town develop into a mere "annexe" of the great city of mills and cotton? Even now it almost merits to be called Manchester-by-the-Sea, though to be sure many other large towns of Lancashire and the West Riding also shoot their thousands hither. It may become the "week-end" sanatorium of the north-west for aught we can tell.

With quiet weather this unique place may be enjoyed idyllically if you choose your spot of sand or grassy bank with methodical discretion. Even on Bank holidays it is possible to find a sandbank not wholly appropriated by sprawling humanity. But Blackpool is sometimes favoured with weather that is not at all quiet. This, too, is a feature of the town. A high spring tide, with westerly gales, swirls the waves far over the stout piles, deep-set in the massive sloped embankment which supports the promenade, and sweeps the parade of the delicate and diletante. A storm here is something to remember. During October, 1892, for example, a barque very civilly allowed itself to be

wrecked against the roots of the chief pier, which it knocked about badly. You may still see the timbers of this luckless vessel garnishing the shore—touching the very parade indeed. They do not often get so strong a spectacle as this in Blackpool, and it was to be expected that the photographers would make the most of it. But the fact that life and the weather in most of their phases may thus be tasted here is out of question one of the merits that most commend the place to the regard of the people.

On any fine day from June to September—a Sunday preferably—it is quite a study for a person of an observing turn to stroll up and down the two miles of Blackpool's promenade. From six o'clock in the morning until ten at night people swarm here like ants about the metropolis of an anthill. The seats are occupied to the very ridges of their back supports. Locomotion is a matter of patience. If the sky is a serene blue, the sight is worth seeing. And a tolerable breeze from the sea makes things lively for the young women, who are sure to be decked in high hats, offering most seductive temptations to the wanton winds.

The other day chance took me to the town for a couple of score hours. It was a Saturday at the outset. No more unfortunate day can be suggested to a visitor for his introduction to Blackpool—especially if he has not thought it worth while to wire for a bedroom to one of the hotels. This fact is, of course, intensified on the eve of Bank holidays. I, for example, drove from one hotel to another, and so on, until it seemed probable that I might have to charter the carriage for a bedroom. There was no need for the hotel clerks and young ladies to tell me they were "full to the smoke-rooms." Every corridor teemed with gay Lancastrian bucks, with cigars between their lips, and all manner of rollicking pleasantries on their tongues.

I had at length the luck to get received in a very humble house "for working men." It was a fine stroke of irony—this neglect of an establishment designed specially for them by the hard-working tourists who had rushed hither for the "week-end." The man who at home is a working man, and is not ashamed to appear as such, when he takes a holiday chooses to pose as a person to whom a crown more or a crown less is of small consequence. He does not care to brand himself openly as an artisan by seeking "working man's accommoda-

dation." Rather, he seems to flatter himself that the pale lavender checked suit, the green satin necktie with the diamond pin therein—it must be a real diamond—the twirled moustache, the deerstalker or the Tam-o'-Shanter, worn jauntily, and most of all his manners, entitle him to be received as a parson of some distinction in establishments where swallow-tailed waiters and attendance charges of eighteenpence daily are the vogue.

Well, there is no earthly reason why it should not be so. This is a free land, and the tendency of the age is towards a levelling down of the mighty by inheritance to the rank of those who honestly earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. But it is not in many places as in Blackpool that this lesson is brought home with such force to one's understanding.

Towards ten o'clock on a conventional day in the season the promenade is at its most vivacious pitch. There are donkeys on the sands—if the tide permits—in troops: sleek, mouse-coloured quadrupeds, indifferent to the touch of ordinary walking canes. One after another the visitors take to the donkeys, and are mildly scourged up and down between the curling waves and the throng of holiday-makers. These last enjoy the entertainment. Mother-familias holds her sides with laughter—good to see—as she watches her worthy spouse at such pastime. And the children scamper at the ass's heels, roaring their loudest at the unusual spectacle of daddy as a cavalier.

Of course, too, there are nigger minstrels and vendors of many things. The ambulant photographer is much to the fore here. Life at Blackpool in the season is not hedged in with an insufferable number of "etiquette" restraints. Tom, Dick, and Harry soon scrape acquaintance with Jane, Susan, and Molly. It is managed with cordial laughter and acquiescence on both sides. Away they go arm in arm up the sands, a certain prey to the man with the camera. Their captor arranges them in a lovely group, and from that time forward the chance incident in their young lives gets raised to the dignity of an episode and a memory.

Best fun of all is it to see how the people go to their doom in the broad-beamed boats that are tricked up in the guise of yachts. They enter the boat by the family—father; mother; the girls, who are, or pretend to be, so anxious about their ankles in stepping over the gunwale; and the exultant, mis-

chievous boys. At length the craft is laboriously extruded into the waves. Even the wind at first seems to shirk the task of impelling such a compact load of human beings. But these soon have quite as much motion as they desire, and an hour or two hours later they are set ashore pale and tottering: the older folk irritated by the downfall of their expectations, the young ones still weeping frantically over the most disagreeable cheat.

After dark, with a full moon on the water, one may enjoy some commonplace romantic ecstasies from either of Blackpool's piers. But the authorities do not keep the piers open to the public until a late hour. They sweep the young men and young women towards the landward end with a startling want of courtesy. No doubt this is the natural outcome of circumstances; but more than aught else it seems to tell that Blackpool's clients are not of the kind who themselves waste words in supererogatory civilities.

A FESTIVAL AT BENARES.

THE blazing sun of an Indian March is pouring down with pitiless glare on minaret, dome, and shrine. Thousands of pilgrims are flocking into Benares to celebrate the commencement of the Hindu year with a great religious festival, but only a momentary glimpse of the brilliant crowds can be obtained until the heat declines. Every ray of light between the green lattices of the hastily closed gharry is a ray of blistering flame as we drive to the cantonments, where Europeans dwell under military protection in a less fervid and lightning-charged atmosphere than that of the city, disturbed as it is by frequent fanatical outbreaks from the friction of the different races comprised in a vast floating population of pilgrims.

As several hours must elapse before we can quit the darkened hotel, cool with swinging punkahs, and fragrant with piles of roses, we take a preliminary excursion into Indian history, and discover that Benares, under the name of Káshi, was recognised in the year 1200 B.C., as "an authentic fragment of the oldest Past." The venerable Hindu city is certainly one of the oldest historical sites in the world, but only shadowy glimpses reach us until B.C. 500, when Benares emerged into a distinction which placed it on the highest pinnacle of religious fame, and influenced

the entire continent of Asia. A new light dawned upon the spiritual darkness of the eastern world when the Prince Siddharta withdrew from the vice and luxury of his father's court at the foot of the Himalayas, and went forth as an ascetic to seek deliverance from evil. Years of penance failed to solve the problems of humanity, or to reveal the hidden wisdom so earnestly desired; and renouncing asceticism, Siddharta gave himself up to profound meditation under the famous peepul-tree of Gaya, the result of his mental absorption being the train of thought which was afterwards elaborated into Buddhism.

Buddha was a true philanthropist; he sought the Brahmin sages, to whom he communicated the revelation bestowed upon him; returned to his father's kingdom with a message of hope and healing; and then wandered from city to city, consoling thousands of troubled souls with tidings of light and liberty. Benares became a Buddhist capital; pilgrims resorted thither from every part of Asia; and Brahminism was driven from the field, though not destroyed. Forced back upon itself and increasing in intellectual subtlety, it adapted itself with consummate skill to varying tribes and castes, gradually undermining the more mystical and subjective Buddhism, and finally expelling it from India.

In the twelfth century Benares again became a Brahminical capital, and another foe, fierce and iconoclastic, spread the terror of its name and sword as far as Buddhism had extended the olive-branch of peace. That foe was Mohammedanism.

To the love of conquest and plunder was added the passionate desire to shatter the strongest citadel of the Brahmin creed. Religious zeal wrecked the temples, and razed the city to the ground. Benares was rebuilt and regained by the Hindus, but in the seventeenth century the Mogul Emperor, Aurungzebe, determined to extirpate Brahminism by fire and sword. The city was sacked, mosques were built from the stones of the demolished temples, the Brahmins were crushed under the feet of the elephants in the triumphal processions, and the images of the gods used as steps for the faithful Moslem to tread upon.

But Benares again rose from her ashes, and a century later passed under the sway of Warren Hastings.

When the noonday heat is over, two rival guides offer their services. One, with his

dark face wreathed in smiles, salaams profoundly, and pointing to his companion, says in English:

"This fellow only eat rice. I good Christian. I eat beef—eat everything! Only one caste and one God upstairs."

This confession of faith fails to create the desired impression, and we reject the promising convert for the fanatical Hindu, who stands by in scornful silence, his black eyes blazing with wrath, and his forehead marked with the mystic "Tilak," to show that he has worshipped in the temple of his god.

A dusty road thronged with pilgrims leads into the heart of the city. Women, with orange or crimson saris wound round their slim figures, bear brass lotahs on their heads for the sacred Ganges water, and their pretty brown arms laden with clanking bangles contrast becomingly with their flowing draperies. White robes are relieved by broad stripes of pink or purple, and the sketchy costume of the men consists of a gaddy turban with a red or amber scarf folded round their bronzed limbs. White oxen with gilded horns draw heavy loads of wood for funeral pyres, and Nautch girls wearing green masks and tinselled helmets are followed by a group of women with faces painted yellow, in obedience to the law of their caste. They all wear gold or silver nose-rings; every forehead bears the red or white "Tilak," marked vertically for the Shivaïtes, horizontally for the devotees of Vishnu, and the tinkling of innumerable anklets makes a musical accompaniment to their stately walk. Children clad only in the brown suit with which Dame Nature provides them, dart in and out of the dazzling throng, and copper-coloured babies tumble about in the dust, at the feet of numerous beggars, who drive a remunerative trade by the roadside. The beating of tom-toms before the dancing girls, the thrumming of sitars, and the monotonous chanting of Vedic hymns by hundreds of guttural voices, increase the weird effect of the extraordinary procession. At length the straggling houses become more frequent, and we pass mansions with wreaths of green leaves above every lintel, to show that no Christian foot may cross the threshold. The dwellings of rich and poor mingle in heterogeneous confusion; tumble-down huts prop themselves against lofty palaces, and many of the narrow streets are only available for pedestrians. Tier after tier the shrines and temples rise

above the broad blue Ganges, and the marble shafts of two magnificent minarets form the climax of the impressive picture. Some of the buildings along the shore have assumed additional picturesqueness from the subsidence of their foundations, causing the pinnacled masses of stone to slip into the water, where they have obtained secure positions at apparently dangerous angles.

The famous brass bazaar is our first destination, and the dark corridors offer a welcome retreat from the blazing sun; while the dim alleys gleam with the lustre of the polished metal, fashioned into trays, bowls, and lamps, bells, images and avatārs, cups and flagons. The primitive tools used for the most elaborate designs consist of hammers and punches. A man in rose-coloured turban and orange scarf pricks out the minute and intricate pattern of an exquisite tray with an iron knob and a rusty nail; the artistic moulding of every ornament displaying the inherited instincts and cultured tastes of an ancient civilisation. The brilliant avenues of the silk bazaar, lined with the fairy fabrics of Oriental looms, offer a bewildering variety of attractions. Brocades, mingled with gold or silver thread, form the celebrated "Kincob," a glittering material of great value fit for royal robes; and gauzy textures, apparently woven of moonshine and mist, festoon the long arcades with shimmering folds of rainbow hue. These miracles of Indian handiwork are executed by the Moslem inhabitants of Benares, who occupy the district of Madanpura, and trace their descent from the skilled artificers formerly employed by the Mogul Court. In one of the shadowy lanes gold-beaters draw out gold and silver wires into threads finer than the thinnest silk, the dark faces of the white-turbaned workmen as they bend over the red flames of the crucible suggesting the practice of some mystic rite. Diving beneath a low-browed arch we reach the toy bazaar, where shining lacquer work is stacked up in endless variety of form and colour. The lac, prepared from the gum of the peepul-tree, and held against the toy as it turns on the lathe, when melted by friction to the desired consistency gradually hardens upon the revolving article, the finishing touch being given by the pressure of a palm-leaf upon the surface to render it smooth and glossy.

Emerging into a narrow street, we encounter a tribe of pilgrims from the

Chinese frontier, with flat Mongolian features, long pigtailed and flowing garments of striped Thibetan cloth. The leaders of the band twirl their praying machines, silver cubes filled with parchment prayers supposed to be offered every time the little cylinder revolves. Boys in blue skirts and wearing long silver earrings bring up the rear, their almond-shaped eyes roving round the unfamiliar scene with mingled awe and amusement.

Benares contains more than five thousand Brahmin sanctuaries and three hundred mosques, besides the myriads of smaller shrines in every crevice and corner where a devout worshipper can find room for the image of a Hindu god. The principal temples are surmounted by the flashing trident of Shiva the Destroyer, the tutelary divinity of the sacred city, though every Hindu deity is worshipped by turns in Benares. A reverential crowd surrounds a party of emaciated fakirs, smeared with ashes, painted yellow, and spotted from head to foot with red lozenge-shaped prayer-marks, their credit account with heaven being too long to be chalked on the forehead, and requiring a larger surface for registration. Their matted hair descends to the waist, and every face wears a pitiable expression of pain and patience. One bony wreck performs extraordinary gymnastic antics, and another stands with skeleton arms extended, rigid from long disease.

Now the crowd thickens round the Durga Kund, or Monkey Temple, dedicated to the goddess Durga, authoress of pain, sorrow, and death. She is worshipped by the sacrifice of goats and buffaloes in order to appease her wrath and avert her vengeance. In the centre of the temple court numerous monkeys gambol and chatter as they climb about an ancient tamarind-tree, and the sedate-looking head of this lively family sits on a bough and pelts us with leaves, as though resenting our intrusion within the sacred precincts. The worshippers give alms in food to these sacred monkeys, which are dedicated to Durga, and placed under her protection. An upright post in the quadrangle serves as a sacrificial altar, the animal's neck being inserted within a central slit like a double-pronged fork. The executioner with his axe faces the temple, and an acolyte pulls the hind legs of the victim until the neck is sufficiently stretched for one blow to sever the head from the body. Failure in this particular betokens evil to the offerer of the sacrifice.

A priest is beating a drum before the temple to summon the worshippers. Stalls of votive wreaths surround the walls, and thick garlands of orange marigolds or white temple flowers are hung round the necks of the faithful, and carried in their hands as peace-offerings to the savage goddess. The stone horses of Durga, supposed to bear her forth by night on her errands of wrath, flank the portico with barbaric forms and lion-like faces. Two bronze bells hang from the domed roof, and as the noisy, irreverent crowd presses up, laughing and talking, to the very steps of the shrine, a solemn Brahmin drowns the uproar of voices by the deafening din of a bronze hammer, while his attendant holds out a brazen dish for offerings of money. The image of Durga possesses a golden face, ten arms, a necklace of pearls, and a crown of brazen serpents. Votive wreaths suspended from her neck and piled up at her feet conceal her glittering robes, but the mirth and gossip of the crowd seem unrestrained by the presence of the terrible goddess, a formal act of worship sufficing to satisfy her requirements.

From this unedifying spectacle we pass to the Well of Knowledge, beyond a stone bull which receives homage from a knot of pilgrims clad in scarlet. A red canopy covers the sacred spring of Gyan Kâfe, and a cloth spread over the opening prevents votive offerings from falling into the well, but in spite of this precaution the quantities of rice and flowers which sully the water make it offensive with the constant decay of vegetable matter. A Brahmin serves out the precious liquid to the pilgrims, who drink it thirstily from the brazen cups as though enjoying the overpowering odour of sanctity. Every drop is paid for, and the owners of the well are men of vast wealth, though as clamorous for bakshish as the beggars who crowd round the steps. Ganges water forms part of every votive offering. The worshippers dash it into the well, offer libations to the images in the surrounding niches, and drench the stone pavement until the whole place is a black swamp of mud. The sacred spring marks the centre of the holy city, and a mosque erected as an insult to the Hindu community towers conspicuously above the clustering temples, and occupies the former site of a sanctuary dedicated to Krishna. His image, overthrown by Moslem zeal at the sacking of the temple, according to

Brahmin tradition, prudently cast itself into the well.

Beyond a spiral shrine sculptured into filmy marble lace, the three towers of the Golden Temple reflect the glory of the orient sun on thin plates of beaten gold. A booth on the threshold glows with garlands of red and purple blossoms; alternating with the favourite marigolds; the temple is crowded with fantastic images, sprinkled by the worshippers with Ganges water from their brazen lotahs, before they descend into a walled enclosure to rub their faces with the tails of the sacred bulls, and kiss the mouths of the pampered animals which mingle with the crowd and eat the countless wreaths that are strewn upon the ground. A twisting street lined with temples leads to shops filled with images and all the elaborate paraphernalia of Hindu worship. The silver shrine of Sanichar—the planet Saturn—lights up a dark angle between the two crumbling towers of the Cow Temple, the dirtiest spot in Benares, sacred to the Goddess Annapurna, the female providence of the city. The sanctuary contains three famous shrines, dedicated respectively to Ganesh, the elephant-headed God of Wisdom, Parvati, his mother, and Hanuman, the monkey god, represented as a crowned ape. Beggars rend the air with cries for help, though gifts of rice and money from the worshippers enable these professional mendicants to pass an easy existence. The temple court, with grey Brahmini cows standing knee-deep in wreaths of marigolds, on which they graze, is the favourite place of worship, a prayer and prostration sufficing for the shrines, and all further devotions being paid to the sleek herd of Annapurna's earthly representatives, which are embraced with ecstatic devotion. Image-makers pursue their calling in a mouldering arcade, adorned by a figure of Ganesh, smeared with red lead, and furnished with feet, ears and trunk of solid silver. An open space further on bristles with spiral shrines, and on their marble steps, Brahmin pundits read aloud the sacred "Shastras" to the passing multitudes.

Western associations are so incongruous with the character of this typical Oriental city, that a group of buildings comprising college, town hall and hospital of modern date and English origin, appear as startling anomalies amid the countless memorials of alien races and conflicting creeds. The disused mint, which flanks the tokens of European occupation, offered

an asylum to our countrymen in the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, and from the adjacent palace an English judge of Benares, during the Insurrection of 1799, kept the frenzied Hindus at bay with a spear.

The original form of Hindu theology seems practically buried beneath a dead weight of legendary accretion, and the superstructure, raised to abnormal height by centuries of growth, renders it difficult to estimate the value of the foundation.

From Brahma, the Creator, every kind of existence originated, but the worship of Vishnu, who floats wrapped in dreamy abstraction on the lotus-covered waters which drowned a former world, was found too mystical for the multitude, and ten avatárs, or incarnations, were devised in order to popularise it. The first five are wholly mythical, but with the sixth we touch historic ground in Rama, the priestly hero of the Sacerdotal caste. The seventh avatár was the warrior Rama Chundra, whose deeds are sung in the Indian epic of the Ramayan, and whose name is on every lip. The morning salutation is "Ram, Ram," the funeral cry of every caste is "Ram sat hai"—the self-existent one. The pilgrims pursue their way exclaiming, "Sita Ram! Sita Ram!" and his victory, aided by the monkeys and their god Hanuman, over the demon god Ravana, is commemorated by an annual festival. The eighth avatár is Krishna, a popular defender of his country, worshipped with intense enthusiasm under the form of a flute-playing shepherd standing on a serpent's head. The ninth avatár is Buddha. This was a masterly stroke of Brahmin sagacity, as by acknowledging him to be a divine incarnation, his adherents were gained, and the necessity for a separate creed abolished. The tenth avatár is yet to come, unless, as some assert, it may already be found in the English monarchy! Shiva, the third divinity of the Hindu triad, is described in the Shastras as, "He who destroys life to renew it," but popular devotion apparently stops short of the saving clause, and recognises him as the Destroyer only. Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer, centralise the idea of a triune godhead.

When the purple beauty of a starlit Indian night succeeds to a fiery sunset, we wend our way to the sacred river.

Lanterns carried by pilgrims, and flaring torches on arch and shrine, chequer the city into mysterious breadths of light and

shadow. Weird figures of Ganesh, the guardian of each native house, stand out in startling relief from the blackness of the towering walls, and the river reflects the illumination from strings of coloured lamps, which blaze above the steep bank in twinkling festoons of light. Boats with red lanterns at the mast and flaming torches at the prow, enhance the brilliancy of the scene, and carriages roll along filled with native magnates in embroidered robes and jewelled turbans, or money-lenders in flowing muslins and tall black hats. Veiled ladies peep from curtained litters borne by attendant slaves to richly-decorated private boats, and thousands of pilgrims flock to the edge of the healing waters. Those in front stoop down to kiss the sandy shore, and lave their hands in the sacred current; others prostrate themselves with tears of joy and cries of penitence on attaining the goal of so many hopes and prayers. A gaily-clad group of Sindians and a sturdy tribe of Nepalese, with the native "Kutcheri" in every belt, have travelled a thousand miles on foot through mountain snow, pathless jungle, and burning plain to reach this supreme desire of every faithful heart. Old and young, rich and poor, hale and sick, are all represented here. Some in every pilgrim band, worn out with toil and travel, only reach the Ganges to die, but to them death by the holy river is only the gate of Heaven. The wild and melancholy scene is intensely pathetic, and it is impossible to gaze unmoved on the vast multitudes of struggling souls longing for light and purification.

Taking a boat, we push out to some gilded barges, where Nautch girls are dancing in tinselled robes, with hands and feet adorned by heavy turquoise rings. As the dreamy Nautch proceeds, the dancers don a number of glittering veils and mantles, in addition to the spangled garments, which look suffocating on this hot Indian night. Tom-toms beat, and unknown instruments discourse barbaric music; a guttural voice chimes in with the nasal twang of the East, and an actor attracts a swarm of boats round the red barge on which his stage is erected. The play in dumb show consists of grimaces and grotesque attitudes, and to uninitiated minds appears a very rudimentary performance, but the muslin-robed Hindus smoking narghilés on their gaily-painted boats are convulsed with amusement. Jugglers, snake-charmers, and fortune-tellers attract crowds of spectators, and

the number of illuminated boats is so great that one could easily cross the mighty Ganges by stepping from one deck to another. Only the intention of returning at sunrise induces us to quit the fantastic spectacle. It is midnight when we leave, and at five a.m. we launch again on the blue waters, crimsoned by the flush of dawn. The curving domes and spiral shrines of stone and marble reflect the deepening glow of the sky as we row past the palaces of Hindu rajahs, who come to die at Benares as a passport to Heaven. The ceremonial bathing in the Ganges forms the great morning act of worship, and the bathing ghâts belong to different races, so that each pilgrim band possesses an accredited status in the holy city. Long flights of crumbling steps descend from the towering shrines to the water's edge. The river is already full of bathers, throwing the sacred water over each other from brazen lotahs, with the symbolical rites of their intricate creed. Some stand absorbed in prayer, with thin brown arms raised towards heaven, and careworn faces bathed in tears. Groups of high-caste girls in filmy white veils step daintily into the river, their slaves waiting on the bank. Grey-bearded men and bright-faced boys descend the steps of a neighbouring ghât chanting a wild mantra; and crowds of sick or infirm worshippers are carried or assisted down the steep stairways, and supported by friendly hands as they dip themselves in the healing flood. A ghât where Brahma is supposed to have sacrificed ten horses sanctifies the most unclean, and at an eclipse—always a sacred phenomenon in India—the vanguard of pilgrims generally get pushed into the water volens volens by the dense throng behind them. The stately observatory above this ghât was built by a Rajah of Benares who reformed the calendar, and the instruments of brass and iron with which he worked out astrological problems are still contained within the walls.

As the morning sun sparkles on the brazen tridents above pinnacle and shrine, the crowds increase. One ghât is thronged by pilgrims in green and gold, another is densely packed with white figures, and a parti-coloured mass beyond displays the shifting brilliancy of scarlet, orange, and purple. We land at the Chankia ghât, the seat of serpent-worship lined with brazen images. Sixty shrines surround a tank above the steps, and carved snakes cover a stone pavement beneath the green boughs

of a tremulous peepul-tree. Although snake-worship is dying out, one day in the year perpetuates the ancient devotion; when offerings of buffalo milk, marigold wreaths, and Ganges water are presented at the Serpent's Well, beneath a stone canopy encircled with a sculptured cobra.

Hundreds of tiny flags, red, green, and yellow, disfigure a lovely Nepalese temple of fretted marble. The supplication inscribed on every fluttering pennon is supposed to be repeated whenever it waves in the breeze. The idea of offering prayer on the wings of the wind belongs primarily to the mountain tribes of the Himalayan frontier, who experience the full might and majesty of the wild gales which sweep round the snowy heights, and with unconscious poetry press the motive power of Nature into the service of faith, imagining the tempestuous air as the resistless force which bears their petitions to Heaven. At length we reach the Manakarnika ghât, the sanctum sanctorum of Benares, and the chief place of pilgrimage. Below it lies the Cremation ghât, black with the increasing mass of charred human dust round the ever-burning funeral pyres which are kept alight by ghoul-like figures of the lowest Hindu caste. Some of the smouldering logs are surrounded by mourners rocking to and fro as they watch the lurid flames, and many of the dead are undergoing their preliminary steeping in the Ganges. The fire from which the pyres are lit is the monopoly of a man who, though of lowest caste, is one of the wealthiest citizens. Upright stone monuments of former "Satis" sacrificed here rise from the blackened ashes, and, as we watch the grim scene, a few bones are raked from the burning embers into a basket and thrown into the Ganges, when another body is placed beneath the wood, and the feet covered by the scarlet cloth which bound them when plunged into the river.

The slender minarets of Aurungzebe's mosque soar above the temples and vanish in aerial pinnacles which seem to prick the hot blue sky. Though the plain whitewashed interior offers no point of interest, the view from these lofty minarets repays the toilsome ascent. The irregular streets and crowded ghâts of the city at our feet look like moving ribbons of gorgeous colour. Straw penthouses and red or orange umbrellas lean over flower-stalls, and shelter intending bathers from the sun. Blossoms and lamps float on the water, offerings to Gunga, or tributaries of affection to the

blessed dead whose ashes rest in the cleansing tide. On the alluvial plain of the Ganges, dark forms move about a pink field of Persian roses, gathering the petals from whence the famous attar is distilled. Green rice-fields and yellow-flowered dāl alternate with plantations of indigo, "bluest of things green, greenest of things blue," protected by hedges of castor oil plants, a line of white popples on the horizon marks the beginning of the opium district. Beyond a cluster of thatched huts under plummy palm-trees, the ruinous mounds of Sarnath, and the round tower wherein Buddha turned the Wheel of the Law, break the monotony of the level landscape with mementoes of the time when the presence of the great native reformer consecrated the city which now rejects his teaching. The sacred peepul-tree before the gate of the mosque is encircled by a devout multitude, muttering their mantras with painful monotony as they walk round the gnarled trunk in the flickering light and shadow of the feathery leaves.

We descend to the Temple of Baironath, the invisible city magistrate who rides upon an equally invisible dog. Packs of dogs are fed daily at the temple gates, and a polite Brahmin waves a fan of peacock's feathers over our heads as a safeguard from the assaults of demons, before conducting us to the tank behind the shrine. This marble bath is regarded as the goal of the sacred pilgrimage, and every Hindu who completes the circuit of the holy city crowns the feat by a final plunge into the muddy waters dedicated to the ghostly guardian of mysterious Benares.

Our own pilgrimage is over, and we take a farewell glance at the religious capital of India from the grand railway bridge which spans the Ganges, and links Benares with modern thought and western progress. Our desultory ramble may not prove wholly unprofitable if we learn thereby a deeper sympathy with those spiritual aspirations of our common humanity, which, like seeds buried beneath a weight of earth, shoot upward through the surrounding darkness towards the unknown light of Heaven.

MURTY MULLIGAN'S REVENGE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

WHEN the tide is in, the great Atlantic is not a stone's throw from the village street. If you stood at the door of Patrick

Cassey's "general" shop, you could see the boats, fastened to the black stakes that leaned in the sloping shingle, rising and falling to the music of the tiny waves that drummed against their bows. At low tide they lie still, lolling on the golden sand with its patches of red-brown gravel showing here and there; and the long damp seaweeds, that seem to stretch their brown and amber arms in longing to the receding ocean, make all the air pungent and refreshing. It is a little place—Gurtheen—standing, as it were, with its feet in the water; a little place that holds many a friend of mine—men, ay, and women too, of no high rank, but with simple, kindly, human hearts. I was the son of the doctor who served the tumbledown dispensary, with its green bull's-eye window-panes and little red blinds. It was whitewashed within and without, and its low window-sill made a comfortable basking place for the loiterers, for it occupied a prominent place in the village, between Cassey's "general stores" and Hennessey's public-house. I can remember nothing of my mother but the soft, cool touch of her hand on my head once, when I was a child and very ill. Sometimes I fancy that I remember her voice, but I think it is only a voice heard in some dream that I cannot remember. Yet, perhaps, it is hers all the same. They say my father never was quite the same after my mother died. He devoted his whole life to the healing of his sick, and helping every one he could, except me, his son, whom he left to his old housekeeper and the village schoolmaster. And so I grew up, "the pore docther's gossoon," pitied and made much of by the warm-hearted peasants. I shared their sorrows with them, and they strove to share their joys with me, with a respect and tacit delicacy that kept the social inequality well defined; for my father was of good family, and I always had my rights as "wan av the ould shtook."

Now, as I sit by my cosy fire of an evening with the curtains drawn to keep out the London fog, nothing rests me so much after the long day of office work as the memories of that little corner in Ireland where my childhood and boyhood were spent. Gazing into the glowing coals, I let my pipe go out, and once more stand, in fancy, on the top of Mount Corrin, which rises behind the village. Looking northward, away from the sea, there is the bog—the bog of Tinnimuck—stretching away, away in the sunset, till the land grows

green again, and the furze-clad hedges and grey stone walls that sharply define the green fallow and brown ploughland make the distant slopes look like some huge chessboard. Behind all, the hills of Kerry—Mangerton and The Paps—are a darker blue against the glorious blue of heaven. And there, too—there, still more faint and blurred—is the jagged summit of the Devil's Punch Bowl. How beautiful it all is! How the amber beams of the dying sunlight blend with the rich tones of the vast stretch of brown! Here and there the ricks of turf stand black by the black pools, and with the great patches of rich dark brown show in bold relief against the tan, where the ground is drier; and, lest the picture may be too sombre, the burnished gorse and purple heather have come to dwell on the little hillocks that raise their heads, high and dry, above the damp peat. As the pale rays slant athwart the brown, a purple haze hangs over all, but it does not conceal the tiny dots of scarlet that move below, where some thrifty peasant has pinned up her skirt before she fills a creel with the rough sods.

Then I turn to look seaward, out over the chimneys almost hidden by their soft blue smoke, where the houses huddle together down below. The vast plain of water, violet-hued in the darkling light of evening, is deserted, save for a brown sail or two where a fisher from Berehaven or Bantry creeps along home. How cosily the village nestles at the margin of its haven Mount Corrin, on which I stand, towers at its back; while to the right and left the hills of Corrigreen and Corrigmore rear their great brown bracken-covered bulwarks, that shelter both the village and its little harbour. There lie the fishing fleet, almost at their owners' doors; not much of a fleet indeed—half-a-dozen clumsy black boats, two punts, and Doolan's cutter.

The last, a sombre marine antiquity, was the chief source of income to her owner, She made sluggish expeditions to Berehaven or Bantry, coming back with a cargo of slate, flour, or artificial manure, to be retailed by Patrick Casey. When fully manned her crew consisted of Mike Doolan, master and owner; Mrs. Doolan, his wife; Mickey Doolan, his son, aged fourteen; and "Boxer," Mickey's dog, an unscrupulous yellow terrier with ears that didn't match, and only half an inch of tail. That dog always sneaked about as if he were "wanted," and kept his wretched little appendage tucked tightly down, as if

he feared that such a strongly-marked feature would identify him and lead to his arrest. Mike Doolan was a little man with one eye—he lost his eye when he got the cutter—but there is a story about it.

I remember him a wiry young fellow with black hair and two piercing black eyes. He lived in a little shanty—where, indeed, he still lives—half-way up the hill of Corrigreen on the west side of the haven, and there he managed to support himself and his old mother by working as a day labourer here and there, and keeping a few sheep on his bit of land. Then Mike fell in love, and loved Norah Daly with all the intensity and jealousy of his Celtic temperament. But big Murty Mulligan loved her too, with equal intensity and more jealousy. They had been sworn friends, these two who now were rivals. Together they had plodded barefoot to the low, whitewashed National school at the east end of the village, and together they had protected and made much of little Norrie Daly, their schoolfellow, who trotted between them in the whitest of pinafores and a little scarlet cloak. But it was the raw love of boyhood then; now it was the mature love of manhood, with its wild longing for sole possession.

Norah lived in a tiny cottage on the hillside about two miles from Gurteen, where she kept house for Owen Daly, her grandfather, an old man bedridden by age and rheumatism. They were very poor, for there was no one to dig the bit of land, and labour was dear. But the work was well done, nevertheless. Old Daly's potatoes were never a day later than those of his neighbours, and his oats were always threshed and stored before the weather broke.

"Sure ould Daly have ne'er a wan at all to do a han's turn fur him," Mike would say when I accosted him in the dim evening light, stealthily hastening up Corrigreen, with a shovel or a scythe on his arm.

Another evening it would be Big Murty Mulligan, who strode up the hill with his flail or his spade slung across his shoulder.

"'Tis late you are going to work, Murty!"

"Why then it is that, yer honour," Murty would answer with a sheepish smile. "But there's an owld man above here—mebbe ye've heard av him—wan Daly; an' 'tis in the bed he is all his time, wid pains in the bones av him; an', sure, 'tis as good for me to give him a han' now an' thin."

On these occasions Big Murty always spoke as if old Daly were a mere casual acquaintance, whom, probably, I did not share with him; and I liked him for this little conceit. Well he knew that Owen Daly and I were old friends, but in his eagerness that his services to the old man should pass unnoticed lest they should in any way be connected with Norah, he persistently ignored my acquaintanceship with the little household on the hill, and never mentioned the girl he was serving for. So, for many a day, the old man lived in comparative luxury. All the reward his willing workmen sought was half an hour's chat by the turf fire, while Norah sewed next the candle at the window. They never met, these two men—at least, not at first.

Once, when driving out of the village in the dusk—for my father would take me to distant sick calls to hold the mare—we met Mike slouching down the hill carrying his spade, and with only a very surly "good night" to fling to us.

Later, as we passed Daly's, there was Big Murty in his shirt-sleeves, digging briskly in the growing light of the moon, and lifting a verse from "Lannigan's Ball." I knew then that he had forestalled his rival; and felt sorry for Mike, who was my favourite. But on another evening it was Big Murty who flung past, trying to conceal a pair of shears beneath his flannel wrapper, and afterwards I had a glimpse of Mike on his knees by Daly's turf rick, busily stripping the wool from a struggling sheep by the light of a blear-eyed lantern. He had won the race that time.

It was on a misty October evening that I saw them next, as I took a short cut over Corrignmore Hill, and came out by Daly's borreen. There they were—both of them—storing turnips in a pit at the end of the yard. I stayed awhile to chat with them and watch them. They didn't speak to each other except to suggest or recommend something connected with their work; and then their eyes never met as they took counsel concerning the business in hand with an appalling solemnity. Once Norah came to the cottage door. Instantly they both raised their eyes to look, but turned them on each other at once—each to see if the other saw—then, ashamed of being mutually convicted of spying, their heads fell over their work again, and were not raised until the girl had disappeared indoors. Though I was only a boy in my "teens," I was so struck by

this little scene that I have never forgotten it; and, at the time, I realised as far as a boy can realise such things, how deeply these men felt. After that I often managed to pass old Daly's of an evening, and now I can piece together the glimpses I had of the tragedy that was working itself out with Mike Doolan's story, and was told me long years after.

Days, weeks, and months sped by, but if ever there were need of the work of men's hands at the little homestead on Corrignmore, there were the two figures—one big and burly, the other small and slight—plying spade, scythe, or flail in the dusk. There was a tacit agreement finally, so I learned, that when there was work to be done "above," one or both would be there as soon as their own work set them free.

"Above" was the little cottage on the hill, and by that term it always went on the rare occasions on which either had to mention it to the other; to everybody else it was the usual "owld Owen Daly's." They spoke not a word of love to Norah, who would sit demurely sewing or knitting when old Owen had one of them in—they never were in the cottage together—to rain thanks and blessings on the head that cared less for all the benisons of the saints of Heaven than for one glance of one woman of earth; and that a slight, barefooted girl, who was herself all she could bestow on any man.

"Lord love ye," the old man would say, "'tis ye're good to the pore! Heaven'll give ye yeer reward, for 'tis for the love av Heaven ye dig the bit av land widout. Divil a wan o' me that can give ye anny-thing, an' 'tis ye that knows that same!"

Then the hypocrite at the hearth would bend his guilty head lower, and steal a sidelong glance at the long black lashes, which on these occasions were never raised to unveil the deep grey eyes.

And so they waited. Owen Daly was old and feeble, but, as long as he lived, so long would his grandchild dwell with him, his only comfort and the dearest thing in the world to him. It was no use for the boys to walk to and from mass with pretty Norah, or look in on a Sunday, uncomfortably splendid in their best coats and ravishing ties. In vain was their respectful deference to "Misther Daly, sor"; of no avail their anxious enquiries, "An' how are ye gettin' the health agin, this fine weather?" The simple-hearted old man gratefully made suitable reply, and gra-

ciously recounted the symptoms of the past week, calling on his granddaughter to bear witness to the truthful record of the same and to the gratifying sympathy with which it was received. Sometimes a neighbouring farmer would come in deadly earnest to seek encouragement in his wooing from the maiden on the hill, and, at such a crisis, a strange instinct never failed to bring Mike and Big Murty on the spot. Then they combined their forces, and joined to rout the invader. Should he linger for a whole day, he would never get a chance of seeing the object of his visit alone, and rarely managed even to include her in the conversation, for one or other of his rivals never left his side, while both displayed a marvellous resource of conversational power in his honour. Thus, wooed covertly on all sides but openly on none, pretty Norah Daly went about her duties demurely from day to day. Big Murty Mulligan would have readily sought his fate at her hands, had he any hope of her deserting her grandfather, or of the latter leaving his old home to dwell with a son-in-law; for hadn't Murty a cottage with a stairs in it—a real stairs, not a ladder—and two acres and a quarter of land, besides the cutter that lay below in the haven beneath Mike Doolan's cottage? Murty was well off, with no one but his old mother to provide for, and a little money in the bank at Bantry. He was a fine fellow, too, and many a girl would be proud to have such a man to take her to mass and fair, though his hair was more red than brown, and his eyes might have been a darker grey. But while Murty had himself, and the land, and the cutter, and the cottage with the stairs to offer; Mike Doolan had only himself, a shanty with no stairs—for there was nowhere to go up to except the thatch—and one big, bare, stony field. Mike would brood over this difference in their fortunes when he came out of his door in the morning, and the first thing he saw was Big Mulligan's cutter, with her great brown sail with the patch of dirty white in the middle, flapping lazily in the breeze at his very feet. Many an oath did Mike, in the bitterness of his heart, launch down the rocky side of Corrigreen Hill, at the cutter that rested on the water like a great moth drying the dew of night from its brown wings. Why did he persist in thinking of Norah Daly? Sure, when the old man died, Big Murty would have no bother at all, only to take her by the hand and carry her off to the priest. And what could he

say? Nothing at all, except that he'd give the blood of his heart for her—always; yes, even though she married Murty! But that would be no use since he hadn't the money.

Nevertheless, with all his philosophy, Mike went on loving and slaving for the girl. So did Murty. It was the old story, only there were two Jacobs serving for the one Rachel, and the end was to be sooner. For one morning—when the usual little knot of loiterers basked in the sun at the dispensary window—some one lounged up with the news that Owen Daly was dead. Big Murty and Mike were there at the time, but when the rest murmured their regret and recalled the virtues of the dead man, they said not a word; only their eyes met for one instant, and each read in the burning look of the other a declaration of war; then, with some muttered excuse, they left the talkers and went their different ways. They met again that night at the cottage on the hill, where Owen Daly was being waked by his friends and neighbours. For many a day they had not been under the roof together, and now they sat: one on each side of the still, sheeted figure: staring into the glowing turf fire, and never raising their eyes except to throw a glance, full of pity, at the slender figure bowed in an agony of grief where the head of the dead man lay. As the night grew the little cottage filled with a sympathising crowd of men and women, and whisperers grew bolder until the room was a buzz of conversation; but still the two men sat motionless, each striving to look into the future and binding himself by all the oaths he knew to accomplish his end by means fair or foul.

All through that night and the next they sat, torn by passions and racked by conflicting hopes; while between them the dead body, in which like passions and like hopes had once dwelt, now lay resting—cold and still—a grim contrast to the living. On the third day was the funeral, and after that things went on as usual, only it was known in the village that, within a week, pretty Norah Daly was leaving the place, to live in Macroom with an aunt who had come to bury "owld Owen," and still stayed with her niece. Then the two men knew that they must know their fate immediately, or lose all hope for ever.

It was the fourth night after the funeral when Mike buttoned his coat to withstand

the driving rain, and, with his teeth set, stepped out of his cottage into the darkness. His mother covertly watched him go without showing the slightest interest in his movements until the door closed behind him, and then, in a moment, she was on her knees before the little crucifix that hung over the settle, wildly entreating the Blessed Mother for her son's safety and welfare.

Meanwhile, Mike strode down the hill, through the village, and up the hill of Corrigmore, taking a longer path along the edge of the cliff that went sheer down to the beach below, for he wished that no one might know of his visit. The rain had stopped now, and the moonlight came fitfully through the clouds that the bellowing south-west trundled down the sky. Half-way round the hill Mike turned to climb the slope, that, descending on the other side, he might approach the cottage from the back. As he faced the hill, a figure appeared on the summit, hurrying down the very path he was to take, and by the light of the moon, which at last had found an opportunity of giving the earth all her rays, Mike recognised the broad shoulders and swinging gait of Big Murty Mulligan.

He paused where he was, on the edge of the cliff where, thirty feet below, the dripping rocks and slimy gravel shone like silver in the silver light; and, further out, the great Atlantic leaped madly up the beach to drag the screaming shingle down. Not until he was within a few paces of the stationary figure did Big Murty seem to see it. Then he stopped short, and flinging his hat to the back of his head, wiped the perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand, and Mike saw that he was pale as death, while his eyes seemed starting from their sockets.

"'Tis late ye're walking out," said Murty, staring full into the other's face.

"No lather than yerself," answered Mike, returning the stare defiantly.

"An' mebbe, now," said Murty sarcastically, "I might make so bould as to gias where ye're goin'!"

"That's no business at all av ye're, Murty Mulligan," said Mike shortly—moving as if to continue his way. But Big Murty stepped in his path, his eyes flashing from beneath his scowling brows, and his clenched teeth showing white between his lips. For a minute they faced each other in the moonlight, while their deep breathing came faster and

louder, and the storm of passion that was rising in their breasts grew stronger and fiercer till it held complete mastery over both. "Why should I let ye come or go?" hissed Murty at length, as if talking to himself.

"I tell ye let me pass," said Mike fiercely, stepping forward and roughly shoving his opponent. But Big Mulligan hardly stirred; he only leaned forward to peer more closely into the other's face, with eyes that yet seemed to glare at nothing—and grasping Mike's uplifted arm like a vice, again he hissed softly to himself: "Why should I let ye come or go?"

For a moment they stood thus, fierce hatred burning in their eyes, till the sea seemed calling to them to strike, the wind screaming to them to kill, and all the night cried murder!

Then they closed and sought each other's throats. To and fro in the moonlight they swayed and stumbled, breathing in long labouring sobs, striving and straining each to get the other down in the grass, where he might kneel on his chest and strangle his life away with both hands. Now the bigger man prevailed, now the smaller, and the end was far from near when Murty managed to snatch his sailor's knife from its leather sheath, and struck his opponent prone on the grass, with the blood that looked black in the moonlight gushing from his temple. The sight of the dark stream on the white face half buried in the grass, and the warm sticky dampness on his fingers, made Big Murty almost mad. He kicked the prostrate form savagely twice, and then with a wild exulting cry, flung away the weapon, and stooping down seized the foot of the unconscious man to drag him to the edge of the cliff, which was but a few yards off. He dragged him to the very edge, and stooping lower, exerted all his strength to cast the body down on the rocks beneath. But Mike's coat had caught in something—a stump of furze, perhaps—and with an oath, Mulligan lent all his strength to another attempt. The next moment there was a hoarse cry, and Big Murty Mulligan fell backwards over the cliff, Mike Doolan's boot firmly grasped in both his hands. A sickening thud on the rocks below, and a groan that was lost in the roar of wind and sea, and the fray was over.

In the early morning some fishers, taking a short cut to the shore, found Mike

Doolan lying with his head in a great crimson stain on the grass. They raised him pitifully, and were bearing him away when some one, catching sight of the signs of the struggle that showed in the trampled turf, peeped curiously over the cliff, and drew back immediately with an oath half smothered with horror. After a shrinking glance at the awful object below, four of the party hastened down to the beach by a steep zigzag path further on. With bated breath and dry lips they raised Big Murty, telling each other in whispers that there had been "bad work betune thim two, an' 'twas the way Mike Doolan, Heaven forgive him, threw Big Murty over—rist his sowl this night!" For they thought Murty was dead, while Mike still breathed.

Mulligan's cottage was nearest, and thither they bore the two men. A crowd seemed to spring up immediately round the low doorway, and half-a-dozen eager messengers sought the priest and doctor—the latter of whom, my father, reached the spot first, just in time to help to hold Murty's mother, who struggled to wreak her vengeance on the prostrate form of Mike Doolan. When the room was cleared of all save the priest and the old woman—who now knelt weeping by her son's head, feebly wiping the blood from his lips with the hem of her apron, and lovingly murmuring to him as if she saw before her, not the stalwart form of a man, but the baby she had nursed thirty years before—my father made his examination. Soon the verdict was known. Big Murty was suffering from internal injuries that would probably prove fatal, though he might recover consciousness before the end; while Mike was safe, except that he would never use one of his eyes again.

Presently the door was opened to a peremptory knock, and Mike's mother was kneeling by him, while an astute-looking police sergeant whispered with Father Murphy. Fortunately the two women did not meet, for Big Murty lay on his bed in the inner room, while Mike was propped up on the settle in the kitchen. The day wore on, and still the watchers watched. The good priest waited that he might be at hand to shrive the dying man when consciousness returned, and the officer in the hope of obtaining a deposition from him in the presence of my father, who was a magistrate. At last, with a great sigh, Big Murty Mulligan opened his eyes, and feebly tried to spit the blood

from his mouth, and the sergeant beckoned Mike, who sat in silence by the turf fire, into the sick-room.

"Have ye anny charge to make agin this man?" asked the officer, as Mike stood sullenly gazing from his bandages at his foe. Murty turned his head slowly to look at him, and when their eyes met a scowl settled on his features, and he seemed about to speak; but the priest, who kneeled by his side, whispered something to him, and the scowl changed to a look of awe. From one to the other he looked, the awe and evil striving for mastery in his face, until at last he turned his face wearily to the wall and muttered:

"Lev me be awhile."

For nearly ten minutes no one stirred, and the silence was only broken by the low wailing of the mother and the muttered prayers of the kneeling priest. Then Big Murty turned his head slowly back and looked Mike full in the face with a scowl of intense hatred. Struggling to speak, he raised his clenched right hand on high to denounce his hated rival; but his mother, raising her head from the pillow, saw only the hand stretched above his head, and silently drawing a little crucifix from her bosom, put it into the tightly locked fingers that mechanically opened to clutch it. When he held it he glanced upwards, and again the awe filled his face, and he slowly drew it down until it was before his eyes. It was a little black cross, carved from bog oak, on which hung the body of the dead Christ, and as the dying man gazed at it, all the evil fled from his face, and great tears forced themselves from his swollen lids. For a minute he lay thus, until a great sob tore his bosom, and, kissing the cross, he looked up with eyes that were softened and sad, yet not altogether sad, and, speaking with a painful effort, said in a low, husky voice:

"Mike Doolan mustn't be bleamt fur this. 'Twas all me that done it to meself. Mikey, boy, will ye forgive me befor I go!"

At the first words Mike's face showed nothing but surprise, but when he heard the broken voice calling him by the old name he had not heard since they were boys together, he flung himself on his knees by the bedside with a choking cry, and seized the great brown hand that was extended to him.

"Whisht, Murty, avic," he cried; "sure I had murder in me heart, I had."

"'Twas me that vexed ye," said the other slowly; "an' I'd have kilt ye then, ony fur the boot av ye comin' off in me hans, glory be to God."

"Hould, hould, Murty, dear," sobbed Mike, with his head bowed low over his friend's hand. "Don't ye ahpake like that. Sure God knows 'tis I had murther in me heart. Tell me ye have me forgiven, now!"

"'Tis ye that must tell that to me; 'twas I that vexed ye," repeated Murty. "Listen till I tell ye," continued he slowly. "I was comin' back from the cottage whin I met ye. Ye know what carried me there. Well, she towld me I had ne'er a chanct at all wid her, and whin I got mad, an' ripped out a curse at ye, she up an' bid me git out av her sight altogether; an' thin I knew 'twas ye was the man, an' be the time I met ye on the cliff I was purty nigh mad, God forgive me."

"Sure He will, He will. God is good."

"Wait awhile; there's worse than that," said Murty feebly, wiping the bloody froth from his lips with the back of his hand. "Whin I opened me eyes here," he went on, after a pause, "an' seen ye stan'ing be the fut av the bed, the divil took hould av me agin, an' I knew if I towld thim that ye threw me down on the beach to murther me, that ye'd swing fur it sure, an' niver git her aither all. I made up me mind to accuse ye before thim all, an' I lying there wid me face to the wall; but whin I turned to tell the lie, wid me fist

up to hiven—God forgive me—I found the little crucifix in me han'; an' whin I took a look at it, an' seen the blessed Jesus wid his pore arms sthretched out to save us all, I—sure I couldn't do it—praise be to God, I couldn't do it."

There was a pause for a moment. Every one was now kneeling round the narrow bed.

"Give us a sup of cold wather, Mikey, boy," gasped Big Murty. "I'm dyin' now, an' before I confess I want to make a will. Ye haven't much to support a wife, Mike, but I'll put ye in the way av it—please God. Will ye be so kind, sor," turning to my father, "as to write down on a bit av paper that Murty Mulligan wills the cutter below in the bay to Michael Doolan, an' all that's in her, along wid the two ounces av tobacco that's hid under a bucket benathe the tiller av her; an' keep her head a thrifle to the starboard, Mike, whin the wind's behind ye; she have a bad warrant to go ahtaight."

Many a year has sped since the dying man sought to make reparation at the last, but if you stand in the breezy graveyard on a Sunday morning you will see the cutter below at her old moorings, resting after the week's work; and, when first mass is over, there are always two figures—a man and a woman—kneeling by yonder grave—praying for the soul of Big Murty Mulligan.

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By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greyatone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIV. TRUE TO HER WORD.

NOT for an instant did it occur to Penelope to rebel. She had come to do her uncle's bidding, indeed she had unconditionally agreed to do it, but she had made herself believe that inclination and duty were henceforth to walk hand in hand. Only a minute ago she had been intensely happy, and her whole nature had risen to meet that other nature so much nobler, so much grander than her own; and then with his few words her uncle had shattered her dream castle.

"Philip Gillbanks — Mr. Bethune's friend?" she said absently. "Does he understand?" She was forcing herself to be calm and to speak without betraying emotion.

"Oh, yes, he is desperately in love with you. It was love at first sight, he says, and he will fulfil all the conditions I impose."

"I have had other offers, uncle. Is he the best? Forgive me for asking you, but he is not well born." Her voice was hard now, but perfectly calm.

"No, but a lion who is caught in a net must stoop to accept the help of the mouse to nibble away the string. It will not be the first time. Besides, the other offers, Penzie, were from men of rank certainly, but all were either poor or extravagant. They wished to make you their wife because of your beauty. Philip Gillbanks loves you for yourself; the rest we must overlook."

Penzie was silent for a moment, and her uncle continued:

"I wish he had been born a Bethune and had possessed the Gillbanks money. Mr. Bethune is a mere beggar in comparison, and, besides, he is bitten with that Radical nonsense. By the way, he is upstairs, you said. I don't want to see him yet, I am busy. Can you get rid of him?"

"Oh, yes, uncle, certainly. We can lunch alone."

Penelope looked at her uncle, and suddenly she noticed that his handsome face looked haggard, and that his right hand shook a little as he opened the door for her. "He is in trouble," she thought. "He has done this for me, for us. What is the luck that has turned?" As she slowly walked upstairs the truth flashed into her mind. Her uncle had earned this money by gambling; the money that had brought her into this charmed circle of society and had caused her to know Forster was won at play!

Should she rebel? But no, a Winskell had never broken faith; perhaps her uncle might be disgraced, he, the noblest and best Winskell—that must never happen.

As she reached the head of the stairs Penelope Winskell felt herself transformed. She had descended them with a beating heart, ready to love and to be loved, ready to be moulded by the man who had called forth her noblest instincts, but now she must be strong in the power of her woman's will and of her ancient pride. She had come to London determined to marry a rich man. On her arrival this had seemed perfectly easy; she had never thought of dreading it; it was only now that the sacrifice appeared great and terrible. As a class she despised the "nouveaux riches," and she must accept one of them as her husband.

She loved Forster because he was a leader among men, and she despised Philip, his friend, because he was a mere disciple. She found now that she must marry him because he was rich, and her vow compelled her to obey.

She must obey, and an evil spirit seemed to enter into her very soul as she clenched her hand and repeated to herself:

"I must marry Philip Gillbanks, but I shall never love him. I can love but one man."

She opened the door and walked up to Forster Bethune, who was standing where she had left him. He was gazing out of the window in an absent manner, evidently seeing nothing that passed till Penzie's footstep roused him.

She held out her hand. She wanted to feel his touch once again, the touch that was magical and which made her his slave.

"Penelope—have you really come back to work with me?"

"No," she said, "I have come back to say that I cannot do it. I thought just now that I could, but—it cannot be."

Forster Bethune seemed to wake up suddenly from his dreamy happiness. He was so much accustomed to succeed, and to carry conviction with him, that this sudden change was more than he could understand.

"But just now—you said——"

"I spoke without thinking! I feel that your work is beyond me, and that, that—forgive me, Mr. Bethune, for a moment's mistake."

A flush of anger spread over Forster's handsome face. He looked very noble, and the pride of birth came out now in spite of himself.

"You spoke of money just now. Have you found out that I am not rich enough?" He was very scornful in his tone.

Penelope saw now that her only defence was the old pride which towards him was only assumed.

"It is true. You forget that your wife must have more money than the wife of a cabman. I must marry a rich man."

"Then I was mistaken in you," he said, his eyes flashing contempt. "Your beauty has given you strange power over men, but you will some day——"

"You need not prophesy," she said in a low, bitter tone; and then she saw that he was gone, and that she was quite alone.

"If I had known, if I could have guessed," she thought, sinking down into a chair and pressing her burning eyeballs.

Suddenly the door opened again, and a servant entered to tell her lunch was ready.

Penelope waited only one minute to look in the glass. She was surprised to see that she was not changed. There was the same face she was accustomed to see; she was still the same outwardly, whilst inwardly she knew she was another being. She had loved, but she had voluntarily given up the man she loved.

She found her uncle waiting for her.

"I think, child, you had better know in case you hear anything. Lord Farrant has got me out of my difficulty; he has lent me the sum necessary to pay my debt of honour, but we must leave town as soon as possible. Gillbanks is coming this afternoon. He very properly asked me if he might see you. Well, we have settled everything; he is most generous. Everything is safe for the future. You have saved your father's house, Penzie."

"I shall do as you tell me," said the girl quietly. "But that other debt, uncle; we must repay it as soon as I am married."

"Yes, as soon as you are married."

"There must be as little delay as possible."

"Yes, I have kept enough to pay off the servants and any stray bills, and then to get back ourselves."

Penelope felt at this moment that nothing she could do could repay this devotion, but the sacrifice required of her was one she had not understood, it was a cruel sacrifice.

"Uncle, if Mr. Gillbanks comes this afternoon, can you see him and tell him I will marry him?"

The Duke looked at his niece, and a faint colour came into his face.

"You must see him yourself, Penelope. He is in every way worthy of you."

"Not by birth. No, I only marry him for his money, and because the house of Winkell needs it."

"But Bethune likes him. He is a good fellow. I hear nothing but praise of him."

Penelope was silent.

"Yes, of course, you must see him. He worships the ground you tread on, as books say. You are fortunate, child. Some men would——"

"You and I quite understand each other, dear uncle; we never pretend. I don't love Philip Gillbanks, but I am going to marry him. He does love me, and he wants to say that he has won me. We know that it is nothing of the sort.

He happens to be richer than—than Mr. Bethune, for instance. If Mr. Bethune had been the richer of the two, I would have married him, that is all."

"Bethune will marry a common person. He has ideas about the people. You must see Gillbanks. He will not expect much from you. You are to have a handsome settlement, and really a most generous allowance. You will want for nothing."

"You mean, uncle, that the estate will be saved?"

"Yes. I must leave you, dear, after luncheon, and go into the City to wind up some important affairs. Mrs. Todd will return to the Farrants' to-day. I have settled it with Lady Farrant, and she understands that there is need for speedy departure."

"We shall go back to Rothery," said Penelope. "We seem to have been away such a long, long time. Yes, let's go back at once. London is becoming stifling. I can't breathe here, I can't live here."

The Duke looked at his niece with a strange expression on his face. He had never before seen her so petulant.

"Forgive me, Pensie, for this haste; I could not help it."

In a moment Pensie controlled herself.

"I was only saying that I was glad, very glad, uncle, that we are going home. I know what life is now; I am satisfied."

"You have been a great success."

When her uncle was gone away, Penelope looked round the rooms trying to realise what had happened. She seemed only able to see Forster Bethune standing by the window and speaking with indignation of her conduct.

"I might have been his Princess," she said fiercely, for she was beginning to realise more and more every minute that she could not love any but the one man who had that mysterious power over her.

Mrs. Todd's eager step on the stairs brought her back to mundane ideas.

"Dear Miss Winskell, have you heard that I am obliged to leave you to-day? Dear Lady Farrant says she has spoken to your uncle, and that he has agreed to let me go. She has a young cousin in the house and is suddenly indisposed, and she says I can make everything go, and that I must come. She knows your stay here is short, but I am in despair."

Penelope appreciated Lady Farrant's kindness and tact at this moment.

"Of course, we would not keep you under the circumstances," she said quickly.

"I shall come back the first minute I can, you may be sure; and I hear a little rumour—of course, just the slightest whisper—of something pleasant which has been decided about you."

"Do you mean my engagement?" said Pensie impatiently. "You know I came to London to find a husband."

"Yes, many girls do; but do pray put it less broadly, dear Miss Winskell. It sounds so odd. I must not stay a moment. I shall only pack a few things and send for the others. It is such real happiness to be wanted by one's old friends. There is the telegraph boy. It must be for me. No, it is for your uncle."

Penelope took the orange-coloured envelope and put it on the chimney. It must be about some of her uncle's money worries; doubtless it was of a private nature.

As Mrs. Todd ran downstairs she met Philip Gillbanks in the hall. His face was beaming with happiness, and his radiant expression could not be hidden.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Todd as she got into her cab, "I thought it was Mr. Bethune whom she was going to accept. What a strange girl! Not like any one else I have had to do with. That poor young man will repent at leisure, I expect; but he is rich, and that will please her. What a mercenary woman she is, and as proud as Lucifer! I shall enjoy myself much more with the dear Farrants."

With these words Mrs. Todd shook the dust off her feet and retired to pastures new.

CHAPTER XV. LOVE ON ONE SIDE.

PHILIP GILLBANKS had risen from Hades into the seventh heaven, when he had found his wooing suddenly made so easy for him. He had expected to be repulsed. He knew he was unworthy of this beautiful Princess, but he was very deeply in love. He had fallen in love at the Palace, and the ideal woman he had then mentally created had been always in his mind. He loved Penelope with the unreasoning, absorbing passion of a "preux chevalier." He knew she was proud and not easily to be won, but even Forster, who never flirted or fell in love, had owned that the Princess was not an ordinary type of woman, but that she was one to whom worship must be given, and who was as superior to the sex as she was above the ordinary little artifices common to the female character.

The Duke had bidden him come and woo her in person, and he had almost promised Philip success. He knew that latterly she had been unusually kind and gracious to him; in consequence he had become more hopeful, guarding his secret more jealously, for even to Forster he could not mention it. Indeed, he hardly liked to own to Forster that he must now give him divided love. His belief in Forster's cause was as strong as ever, but his first duty must in the future be his Penelope, that is if he were fortunate enough to win her. If——!

But suppose he should not be really accepted by her? Suppose the Duke had been too hopeful? Philip's hand trembled as he said the ordinary "How do you do?" and his heart beat fast when the servant shut the door and retired, leaving him alone with the Princess.

Penelope, on the contrary, was very calm; she held a piece of work in her hands, and, as she sat down, her eyes were bent upon it. She did not help Philip with a look or a word.

"The Duke said I might come and tell you all," he said, after a pause. "From the first moment I saw you I have loved you, and only you. Give me as long a probation as you choose, only give me hope at the end. I know I'm not worthy of you, and I know that my family is not nobly born as yours is, but we have an untarnished name, and we mean to keep it. My father has no other son, and he will agree to anything your uncle or your father may suggest. For myself I only ask for your love. You have all the love that I can give or shall ever give to a woman, and, Heaven helping me, you shall never know any sorrow that I can keep away from you."

Penelope was silent. At this moment she felt that she hated Philip all the more because his words were noble; she would have been more satisfied had he been worthless, and had she been able to hate him with good reason; but no, Philip Gillbanks was noble-minded and devoted—but he was not Forster. He was willing to sacrifice himself for her good, while Forster, on the contrary, had asked her to sacrifice herself for him.

The pause lasted so long that she felt obliged to speak.

"I want you to know one thing first, Mr. Gillbanks. I shall marry the man who will let me go my own way, who will sacrifice his money for the building up of my home, and who will be satisfied to take me

as he finds me, without requiring protestations of affection, which I cannot give. If you accept this, I will be your wife."

Philip was staggered by her words. The feeling that she consented to marry him, and yet only consented in this cold manner, frightened him a little, but the next instant he interpreted her coldness by his own warm feelings. His Princess was not like other women; he had always recognised that fact. She was outwardly proud and cold, but no woman could resist such love as he would give her; he would teach her the meaning of love.

He sat down beside her and took her passive hand. He would have given all his wealth if she had pressed his a little, or shown one sign of love. But no such was visible.

He kissed her hand passionately, and she did not resist him.

"I think I can love enough for two of us," he said, "if only you will accept the gift I give you—my life's devotion and my entire trust. Penelope, do at least believe in that! For without belief in me you cannot become my wife."

"Forster Bethune's friend cannot be untrustworthy," she said, and Philip was too unsuspecting to be struck by this strange answer.

"Thank you; I do owe all that is best in me to Forster. To be with him is to believe in life's best gifts of love and work. You will let me go on with that work even if our home is at Rothery? I have thought it all over, darling. I will show to the world that your husband must be noble indeed if not rich in ancestors. In your dales there are many lives to be made better and happier, all the more, perhaps, because they are not in such abject poverty as are our London people. My wife shall be their true Queen."

"I shall be what I have always been," she said proudly, for Philip's words displeased her. She could not forget that by marrying him she was stooping from her high position.

"Yes, darling, what you have ever been—the beautiful Princess of Rothery. You know I have enough money to gratify any fancy you may have, any wish you may express."

Penzie was wearily wondering how soon Philip would go away, when a ring was heard.

"That is my uncle's step," she said, starting up. "There is a telegram waiting for him which I must give to him."

The Duke's face had lost its look of sadness, and when he entered the drawing-room and saw that Phillip was there, he shook him warmly by the hand.

"Welcome, Gillbanks. I see you found that Penelope was waiting for you. Let me congratulate you, my dear fellow."

"Indeed, I can hardly believe my happiness," said Phillip, looking shy and disconcerted, "but I shall try to make her life one long ray of sunshine."

"Rothery will hardly ratify that promise, but you will find that it is not a bad place to live in, after all."

The Duke was all smiles as he spoke. He opened his telegram and glanced at it, then cast a rapid look at Penelope.

"I must go home at once to Rothery. Look, Penzie, some one sends this telegram—'Come at once.' What can it be? I do not like leaving you alone. By the way, Gillbanks, will you come with me? Your presence may be necessary, and besides, you must interview the King, though you need have no fear of a refusal from him."

"Certainly, sir, I can be ready at once, if you like—I wish to be of real use to you," he added, turning towards Penelope. "But you must not stay here alone. I am sure Mrs. Bethune would take you in."

Penzie's heart gave a leap, but she restrained her wishes.

"No, let me stay here alone, uncle, to pack up, and I will follow you as soon as possible."

She was glad that this unforeseen interruption to Phillip's courtship had come. He would be out of her sight for a little while. Perhaps, when she saw him again she would have schooled herself to go through her task with true fortitude; but in any case she could not, she must not, go to the Bethunes.

An hour later the house was silent and deserted, and the servants were told to say "not at home" to any callers who might come.

As far as the London world was concerned, the reign of the Princess of Rothery was over. She threw herself on the couch and remained in this position for several hours, trying to kill her love for Forster by forcing herself to see that she could never have lived the life he would have required of her but at the end of her meditation, she said to herself:

"It's not true, it's not true, I could have done it all for him! Why did God

give me the power of loving this man? Oh, Heaven! take it away. I never knew what it meant when I played with fire; but I must not be weak. I have pledged myself to obey uncle. I must marry Forster's poor-hearted disciple. I must, I must! He will build up the house again, and save the Winakells from being swept away from the face of the old dales. They have a right to live there, and a right to rule there. I must do it. If only I could marry him at once—now, to-day—and have done with it. I would if he had not gone away. I must, I must do it, but I shall never love him, never!"

At last she had to rouse herself.

She and Betty began to work hard. The other servants were dismissed, and the house was restored to order before she received a letter from her uncle.

"DEAR PENELOPE,—We were only just in time to see your brother breathe his last. There was a boat accident on the lake. The craft capsized. Your father was also thrown out, but he managed to swim to the island. Then, not seeing David, he plunged in again to try and save him, but he had struck against a rock, and all is over. Your father is very ill, but he can just give consent to your marriage, which must be gone through at once—for this last misfortune has unfitted your father for further exertions. He sits all day in his chair outside on the terrace gazing at the lake. He cannot forget his fate, and will not attend to business. The estate must be saved at once, for the creditors are already beginning to buzz about our ears. Gillbanks has offered to do the only thing that can be done now—i.e., to buy back the whole place privately, in your name. Nominally all is to go on as usual, but Rothery will, in future, be yours, and not your father's. I shudder to think that we nearly failed; however, Gillbanks says you are not to be troubled with details. The wedding must be strictly private, on account of your brother's death. You will want no finery, and no fuss. We were on the brink of ruin, but now we can breathe freely again. You have done a noble work, Penelope, and your reward has already begun.—Your affectionate Uncle, "GREYBARROW."

In a dream Penelope Winakell left London, and in a dream she returned to her old home, but she looked upon it now with new eyes. It was the price of

her sacrifice, and this knowledge was at the same time bitter and sweet.

In a week she was to marry Phillip Gillbanks quite privately. From respect to her sorrow he had left Rothery before her return, but he had written her a long letter full of love and devotion, which she did not even read to the end. When she approached her father he looked at her strangely, and then remarked in broken sentences :

"It was to be the girl, after all. You have all your great-aunt's pride, Penelope, and she was a match for the devil. The King of Rothery might as well be dead, for a stranger is coming here. It is your doing, girl."

"Not a stranger, father," said Penelope, "but the man I am going to marry."

"A man with no pedigree. Ay, ay ! A man who can never be your equal !"

STAMBOUL REVISITED.

STAMBOUL at night, in the darkness and gloom, among a labyrinth of lanes and narrow streets, the clue to which we have lost. And here, at the end of a narrow passage, further progress is altogether barred by an iron-grated gate with gilded spikes. A dark, suspicious-looking figure lurks in the angle of the wall ; the yelping of dogs is growing louder and louder, as if one of the ferocious packs that haunt the streets of old Stamboul had scented out the hated Giaour. Where can we be ? Not far, probably, from the Seraglio, and visions of unhappy creatures crammed hastily into sacks and pitched into the Bosphorus to drown at their leisure, give a lurid kind of interest to the situation. But the cry of the pack is now eager and ferocious, and there is nothing for it but to shake and hammer at the gate on the chance that somebody may be at hand to open it. And then some one discovers a bell-chain, which he tugs at lustily, and which rings a bell a long way off ; and at the summons there appears at the grating a huge black porter with a lamp in his hand, the light from which gleams upon a livery of crimson and gold. His white teeth, his glittering eyes, his polished skin, all seem to shine ferociously upon us, as he shouts out what is probably a denial of our right of way.

But after all, what gate is there that judicious backsheesh will not open ? Our Mauritanian giant grins from ear to ear as

he recognises the profile of Victoria. He unlocks the gate, and points to a row of twinkling lights at the end of the broad avenue that opens before us. "Yonder is Stamboul Bridge. You know that, ai ?"

Yes, we have our bearings now we are among shops, and streets, and glittering cafés, while the murmur of a myriad tongues is heard as the crowd passes gaily to and fro. But as, like Mr. Pickwick after his memorable interview with Dodson and Fogg, we feel a little ruffled by our late adventure, we will follow his example by taking a little refreshment. In the café which we entered, and which was quite Parisian in its arrangements, there sat at one of the little tables a pleasant, military-looking man, with grizzled moustache, and a pretty girl, apparently his daughter : no doubt visitors, like the rest of us, to old Stamboul.

"Things are changed," he said, as he offered us a light for our cigarettes, "since I last saw the place at the end of the Crimean War. There were divans then, and you smoked tchibouques as long as from here to yonder, and a black slave lighted you up with a glowing lump of charcoal from the brazier. And the coffee, with the grounds in it, and the sweet-meats ! And you might see the turbaned Turk, with a long beard, squatting majestically in a corner, and the veiled women peeping at you with glorious eyes. All gone now," said the Colonel, with a sigh. "But the 'baccy is pretty good still."

"Try von of dese," said a deep voice beside us, and turning round we saw a stout, middle-aged Greek in a red fez, who proffered a handful of cigarettes. "Try von, sar. Try von, ma'meselle," turning to the young lady, who looked a little doubtful.

The Colonel declined stiffly for self and daughter ; but the rest of us partook of our new friend's tobacco without misgivings.

The effects of that Greek's cigarettes were very curious. Not poppy, nor mandragora, nor any drugs inside or outside the pharmacopœia could be credited with just that particular influence. A sort of easy credulity, coupled with a sublime indifference to the limits of time and space, seemed to take possession of our senses. The Greek eyed us keenly with glittering eyes, entertaining us meanwhile with softly-uttered reminiscences of the former glories of his country ; for his country it was and would ever be, as the Ottoman horde were

only so many vagabond squatters on the land.

"Gently!" cried the Colonel. "Don't fall foul of our ancient allies."

The Greek smiled bitterly.

"Well, you have seen our beautiful city, as it rises proudly from the sea, the real capital of the Christian world; you have seen the venerable fanq of St. Sophia, the earliest and the grandest existing temple of our religion, where now the usurping Moslem pray. Your guide would show you that obscure, dirty square, the Almeidan; where once rose the splendid structure of the Hippodrome, where Emperors themselves would contend in the glittering chariot races. These and a few shattered columns, here and there a few ruined arches, what else is there to show for the innumerable public buildings, the theatres, the baths, the courts of justice, the noble palaces of our Christian Emperors?"

"Well, it's a very picturesque old place," said the Colonel cheerfully, "and I'm much pleased with it. Come, Corinna, I think it's time to take our seats for the show."

What did he mean, that Colonel? Anyhow, he politely took his leave, and my companions—we were casual acquaintances who had made a party to explore the city—departed one by one, and left me alone with the Greek. He called himself Manuel—Manuel the third—and when I asked "Why the third?" he replied curtly: "Because the second was dead." And if he meant Manuel the Emperor, no doubt he was right, for the potentate in question was sending round the hat for the relief of Constantinople, then threatened by the Turks some while Anno Domini 1400, in London and elsewhere, when our domestic affairs were in such a tangled state that nothing could be done for him.

An allusion to this drew from Manuel a rhapsody on the ancient glories of his beloved city, the seat of mightiest empire from the days of Constantine, the new Rome, that outshone and outlived its grey old rival; and, rising above the flood of barbaric invasion preserved the laws, the learning, the civilisation of the West, as in a sacred casket. And what scenes the old capital had witnessed, what contrasts and strange dramatic shows! Justinian, the rude peasant's son, with his Empress, the beautiful Theodora, late of the Imperial Circus, but now, in all the glitter and magnificence of royalty, proceeding to their own splendid church of St. Sophia. Belisarius, too, the restorer of an empire, now blind

and old, we may see as a mendicant at the gate.

Or we may search for the porphyry chamber in the great palace, where the heirs to the empire were brought into the world, or sometimes summarily dismissed from it, and there we may picture Irene, the great Empress, deaf to the supplications of her own son, condemning him to blindness and a wretched prison, and departing triumphant in her golden chariot with its four milk-white steeds, each led by a patrician of high estate—and yet destined to end her days in a wretched cabin, earning a precarious crust by the labours of the distaff. And now we have an Emperor slain by turbulent soldiers at the very foot of the high altar of St. Sophia, as he keeps the feast of Christmas, and his rival respited for that one day only from a death in the fiery furnace of the Imperial Baths, dragged from his prison and enthroned in the seat of empire, with the rusty fetters still clanking about his wasted limbs.

Ah, what plots, what murders, what abominations in the ghastly old city! See yonder woman, splendidly daring and wicked, who marches through parricide and domestic treason to a guilty throne, dragging a wretched lover in her train, and all to perish miserably at last! Or, whirling past the blood and tumult of centuries, we may hear the trumpets of the crusaders at the gates, as they pass on to rescue Jerusalem, and to whiten with their bones the barren fields of Palestina. Or again as the chivalry of France and Flanders and the galleys of Venice come against the hitherto unconquered city, and we see blind old Dandolo the first to mount the breach in the ruined wall.

Our friend Manuel has not much to say about the rule of the Latin Emperors which followed the joint-stock occupation of Constantinople by chivalry and commerce. It all happened more than six centuries ago, but he is still sore about the affair, and prefers to dwell upon the revenge of the Greeks, and how with a handful of men they broke through the Golden Gate and swept the place clear of the Flemish hords. And then he discourses in a melancholy tone of how the last fatal siege by the Turks was brought about, and the sad end of it when the Moslem swarmed into the Sacred City, and the Sultan spurred his horse over the marble pavement of St. Sophia, and turning at the high altar, pronounced over the crowds of fugitives and suppliants the laconic formula

of Islam: "There is but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

At this point in Mr. Manuel's narrative I fell asleep. The cushions were luxurious, the air, charged with Eastern perfumes and incense, was of a soft and drowsy character, and there might have been some narcotic property in the tobacco—hashish, perhaps. And I am under the impression that when I was in this somnolent state, my friendly Greek took me by the arm and led me into the street, and I have a vague impression of hearing a musical performance, and passing among brilliantly lighted shops, and finally of being introduced to a number of characters, not unfamiliar by reputation, but whom one would not expect to meet in the flesh.

There was Aladdin in his Chinese wig-wam, assiduously rubbing his wonderful lamp, while its genius, blackest and handsomest of the race, appeared obediently with a banquet of fruit and wine. The fisherman, too, was there by the margin of the enchanted lake, with the brazen vessel that he drew from its depths, and the cloud of smoke, and the huge genie soured by hope deferred, who promised to assassinate his benefactor (as if he were an editor) for not having brought him out before. We were introduced into the royal kitchen, and saw the magic fish that the fisherman had drawn from the enchanted lake, as they reared themselves upon their tails and saluted the fairy who stepped through the wall. We followed that fascinating legend till we came to the King of the Black Isles, half man and half black marble, who did not seem to take the situation as seriously as you might have expected. And with these were a crowd of other figures as you see things in a dream.

"Now come along, I will show you something," said my guide, as if what I had already seen had been nothing, and he hurried me up the steps of an old battered-looking tower—it was the tower of Galata, he said, that the mail-clad knights of Europe had knocked the polish off, lang syne—and soon we came out upon the battlements and gazed around.

It was full daylight now, and there was old Stamboul lying bathed in sunshine. There was Seraglio Point, the white palace rising among the masses of verdure, the blue Bosphorus, sprinkled with snowy sails, and Scutari shining among the dark cypress groves on the Asiatic shore. Kaïks were shooting to and fro, the masts and

flags of the ships, the piratic-looking zebecques, the honest British funnel and iron snout, were all mixed together at their anchorage, the crowd was pouring over the bridges, the sapphire waters of the Golden Horn curved sinuously out of the field of view. Minarets and cupolas without number rose one above the other. You might hear the call of the muezzin from the balcony in the lofty tower.

'Tis the hour when rites unholy
Call each Moslem soul to prayer.

"Very pretty indeed!" It was the voice of the Colonel, who, with his daughter, had joined us on the battlements. "But I should like you to have seen it in 1854."

"Thank you, papa," said Corinna; "what a veteran I should be!"

"See the old barrack hospital over there," continued the Colonel, "and the cemetery where eight thousand of our fellows are lying."

"I wish," said a stout, dignified lady, who was also gazing upon the scene, "that they would put a label on the things, so that you might know what you are looking at."

"A sort of sky sign, eh?" suggested the Colonel. "Not a bad idea; might be carried out in London. 'St Paul's,' 'The Monument,' in huge letters against the sky."

During this colloquy Manuel had vanished without leaving a cigarette behind. And abandoned to my own devices, I descended from the tower, and following the general stream of people, I found myself on Stamboul Bridge, crossing among the crowds I had just now watched from the tower. The masts and prows of ships mingled pleasantly with the arches and domes, and arabesques and latticed windows behind which beauty's eyes might be launching dangerous glances. A crowd of kaïks hung about the landing-place, while a tall coloured man in the Sultan's livery was shouting vigorously, "This way to the boats."

A kaïk by all means, and to the hall of the one thousand and one columns by way of the Golden Horn. Other people jump in; the more the merrier, and these are very merry people indeed. They have just been visiting some Pasha's establishment, and are in high delight with the manners and customs thereof.

"Look here, Arabella, how'd you like to set there in that there beautiful 'arem'?"

"Not for me," replies Arabella. "Catch me in them pink kiksawyckies! Not but what it's money easily arnt."

The joke seemed to please them all very much, and they laughed till they almost rolled out of the skiff. Our kaitja looks over his shoulder and remonstrates in his native tongue.

"Parlezvous," cries Harry. "Governor, what do you have them vegetable marrers on the 'andles of your ears for?"

Shade of Albert Smith! Did he not ask that very question in the overland mail, and has it never yet been satisfactorily resolved? But we get a little more solemn as we pass under the dim subterranean arches and float gently into the hall of the columns, with their quaint Byzantine capitals and grand massive alignment.

It is pleasant floating along by mosques and fountains, by delicate Moorish arches and rude cyclopean walls. And it is equally pleasant to wander among the crowded streets; to watch the carpet-weavers at work at their cumbrous looms, and the embroiderers stitching in sprays of gold and silver. There are no laughing maids at the fountain now, shrieking in mock terror as the young Giaour rides by, and after hasty glances to make sure that no turbaned dervish is in sight, dragging forward the most bashful of their band, and snatching the yashmak from her blushing face. The fountain itself is dry, and the laughing maids are haggard matrons by this time. And where are the Arab steeds at so much an hour, and the troops of dogs that ran snapping and snarling at your heels?

But the pigeons coo softly as they flutter from tower to tower, and the lizards sun themselves on the old crumbling walls. And here is the mosque of some old Moslem saint or sultan, all empty and deserted, with no scowling Believer squatting on the prayer rugs, no guardian or mollah to look for backsheesh, no reader, and no Koran; although everything waits in readiness for the coming of the Faithful.

Pleasant too are the bazaars full of nick-nacks, the pretty Greeks who offer cigarettes, the cafés in cool corners, the pretty girls who wait upon you—whether from Smyrna or from Shepherd's Bush.

"What, ain't you coming to see the show, Mister?" cries friendly Harry, seeing his late companion at a loss. "Here you are, Block B, now come along!"

And something like a show it is; and if Childe Harold had really been in it, it is a

question whether he would ever have come back to his native land. A troop of jingling dervishes would smooth the brow of care itself, and bring a smile to the lips of dull melancholy.

And now there is a shouting of servants and running footmen, a hurly-burly of carriages. Is it that some great Pasha holds a reception? But this is surely very like the Addison Road, and you red omnibus one would swear was going to Hammer-smith. Adieu, Stamboul! but au revoir, too, for we mean to find that Greek again, and get a few more of his famous cigarettes.

SCOTTISH SOCIAL LIFE IN THE OLDEN TIME.

THERE are some aspects of the past which have an interest for others than the antiquary or psychological student, and a deeper interest, let me add, than that which arises merely from a gratified curiosity. While its romantic and picturesque scenes attract the attention of even the most ordinary observer, its graver features, with their suggestions of weighty truths and valuable morals, appeal to all who are conscious of the strange perversity of the human mind. In fact, as all history is more or less a record of the errors and follies of mankind, those chapters which treat of a past not too remote to engage our sympathies can hardly fail to embody a warning, or a counsel, or an encouragement capable of being utilised by ourselves. Such I take to be the case with certain passages in the social life of Scotland—a social life by no means of great antiquity—which have recently been illustrated by the research of competent enquirers. They show, for instance, to what wild extravagances the credulity of mankind can condescend. They show the wide range of the superstitions of the common people, the way in which they coloured their everyday life, the curious manner in which they were mixed up with almost every incident. And we might be disposed to ridicule, or rather to compassionate the weakness of our forefathers, if we did not remember that the present generation is, unfortunately, not without its follies and ineptitudes also; that we are not yet in a position to assert our entire freedom from the taint of ignorance and credulousness, or to plume ourselves upon our superiority over the generations which have preceded us.

I shall not dwell upon the characteristics

of a Scottish Sabbath, because these have been insisted upon "ad nauseam," and the most has been made by unsympathetic writers of its original gloom and dreariness. Nor need I enlarge upon that strong yearning after knowledge which has always possessed the hearts of the youth of Scotland, nor on that wise and liberal educational system which Scotland owed in a great measure to the sagacity of John Knox. The success which her sons attained in the different departments of literature and commercial enterprise, the arts and the professions, was due to their admirable parish schools, in which the son of the laird sat side by side with the peasant's son, and both received a sound and comprehensive education. For twenty shillings per annum each underwent a careful and thorough training which, if he were a lad of parts, fitted him for entering the University. When the time came for his removal to Aberdeen or Glasgow, thither he trudged on foot, with his little all in a knapsack slung from his sturdy shoulders; and during the "sessions" it was a hand-to-hand fight with poverty which the eager youth gallantly fought while prosecuting his studies with unflinching resolution. I suspect there is little now of that self-sacrifice and dour tenacity which was so common in the student-life of Scotland fifty or a hundred years ago, when a few potatoes and salt herring served for dinner, a basin of porridge for breakfast and supper, and the whole expenditure of the academical year was covered by twenty and even as little as sixteen pounds. Graphic sketches of this laborious and painful apprenticeship to knowledge are given in two or three of George MacDonald's earlier works, and they are not less truthful than graphic. The present writer knew a minister of the Scottish Church who, in his student days, had earned, by teaching during the winter, the wherewithal to cover the expenses of his college terms, and these expenses had never exceeded eighteen pounds. I am inclined to believe that knowledge was more valued when it was obtainable only at such a cost of self-denial, of patient endurance, of heroic fortitude; and I am sure it was more thorough, and became more entirely a man's own when it was thus arduously wrung, so to speak, from the reluctant goddess by strenuous mental travail and even physical suffering.

A strange world was that of the Scottish peasant in the time of which I write. His hard-headedness and matter-of-fact stolidity

are among the commonplaces of superficial writers, who have failed to perceive the wild, original imaginative power that lay beneath the surface, and how close was his contact with the invisible world of fancy; how he loved to feed his mind upon its wonders, on its signs and omens and portents; how thoroughly he believed in its existence, and in its influence upon the fortunes of humanity. From the cradle to the grave he went his way, attended, as it were, by the phantoms of this mysterious "other world"—always recognising its warnings, always seeing the shadows which it cast of coming events, and so burdening himself with the weight of what we now call his superstitions, that surely he must have stumbled and sunk beneath it but for that living faith in the Almighty which he derived from his religious creed.

The fire and force of the Scottish imagination are seen and felt in the ballads of Scotland; its fertility is conspicuous in these superstitions—in the folk-lore of the common people, their traditions and social customs.

Thus, on the birth of a child—to begin at the beginning—it was imperative that both the mother and babe should be "sained"; that is, a fir-candle was carried thrice round the bed, and a Bible, with a bannock or some bread and cheese, was placed under the pillow, and a kind of blessing muttered—to propitiate the "good people." Sometimes a fir-candle was set on the bed to keep them off. If the new-born showed any symptom of fractiousness, it was supposed to be a changeling; and to test the truth of this supposition, the child was placed suddenly before a peat-fire, when, if really a changeling, it made its escape by the "lenn," or chimney, throwing back words of scorn as it disappeared. There was much eagerness to get the babe baptized, lest it should be stolen by the fairies. If it died unchristened, it wandered in woods and solitary places, lamenting its melancholy fate, and was often to be seen. Such children were called "tarans."

Allan Ramsay, in his "Gentle Shepherd," describing Maunse, the witch, says of her:

At midnight hours o'er the kirkyard she raves,
And houns unchristened weans out of their graves.

It was considered a sure sign of ill fortune to mention the name of an "unchristened wean," and even at baptism the name was usually written on a slip of paper, which was handed to the officiating minis-

ter, that he might be the first to pronounce it. Great care was taken that the baptismal water should not enter the infant's eyes—not because such a mishap might result in wailings loud and long, but because the sufferer's future life, wherever he went and whatever he did, would constantly be vexed by the presence of wraiths and spectres. If the babe kept quiet during the ceremony, the gossips mourned over it as destined to a short life, and perhaps not a merry one. Hence, to extort a cry, the woman who received it from the father would handle it roughly, or even pinch it. If a male child and a female child were baptised together, it was held to be most important that the former should have precedence. And why? In the "Statistical Account of Scotland" the minister of an Oradian parish explains: "Within the last seven years he had been twice interrupted in administering baptism to a female child before a male child, who was baptised immediately after. When the service was over, he was gravely told he had done very wrong, for, if the female child was first baptised, she would, on coming to the years of discretion, most certainly have a strong beard, and the boy would have none."

I pass on to the honeyed days of "wooing and wedding," and find them prolific of what Brand calls "the superstitious notions and ceremonies of the people."

If a maiden desired to summon the image of her future husband, she read the third verse, seventeenth chapter, of the Book of Job after supper, washed the supper dishes, and retired to bed without uttering a single word, placing underneath her pillow the Bible, with a pin thrust through the verse she had read. On All-hallow Eve various modes of divination were in vogue. Pennant says that the young women determined the figure and size of their husbands by drawing cabbages blindfold—a custom which lingers still, in some parts of Scotland. They also threw nuts into the fire—a practice prevailing also in England, as Gay has described:

Two hazel nuts I threw into the flame,
And to each nut I gave a sweetheart's name;
This with the loudest bounce me sore amazed,
That in a flame of brightest colour blazed.
As blazed the nut, so may thy passion grow.

Or they took a candle and went alone to a looking-glass, eating an apple, and combing their hair before it; whereupon

the face of the future spouse would be seen in the glass, peeping over the foolish girl's shoulder. Burns describes another of these charms. "Steal out unperceived," he says, "and sow a handful of hemp-seed, harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat now and then, 'Hemp-seed, I sow thee; hemp-seed, I sow thee; and him—or her—that is to be my true love, come after me and pou' thee.' Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, 'come after me and show thee'—that is, show thyself—in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, 'come after me and harrow thee.'"

It is curious to read that the wedding-dress might not be "tried on" before the wedding-day; and if it did not "fit," it might not be cut or altered, but had to be adjusted in the best manner possible. The bride, on the way to church, was forbidden to look back, for to do so was to ensure a succession of quarrels and disasters in her married life. It was considered unlucky, moreover, if she did not "greet" or shed tears on the marriage-day—a superstition connected, perhaps, with that notion of propitiating the Fates which led King Amasis to advise the too fortunate Poly-crates to fine himself for his prosperity by throwing some costly thing into the sea.

It was thought well to marry at the time of the growing moon, and among fisher-folk a flowing tide was regarded as lucky. Childermas Day was regarded as singularly unfortunate. Notions and customs such as these were puerile enough, to be sure; but before we censure them too harshly, we must ask ourselves whether our weddings nowadays are wholly free from superstitious observances; whether we do not still fling old slippers, and smother with showers of rice the "happy couple"?

On the occasion of a Northern wedding, the young women of the clachan, with bride-favours at their bosoms and posies in their hands, attended the bride early in the morning. Fore-riders announced with shouts the bridegroom's arrival. After a kind of breakfast, at which the bride-cakes were set on the table and the dram handed round, the marriage ceremony was proceeded with. Then bride and bridegroom went in gay procession to the latter's house, the pipers playing their merriest tunes, and the well-wishers of the wedded pair shouting themselves hoarse. The rest

of the day was spent in dancing and merry-making. If the couple had little stock and less money, they started off next day with cart and horse to the houses of their friends and relatives, and collected doles of corn, meal, wool, or whatever else the generous donors could afford.

It is needless to say that the "last scene of all" was invested with every attribute of grotesque terror which the popular imagination could invent. Before it took place the light of the "death candle" might be seen hovering from chamber to chamber, just as the Welsh see the "fetch-light," or "dead man's candle"; the cock crowed before midnight; or the "dead-drap," a sound that broke the silence of the night like that of water, falling slowly and monotonously; or three dismal and fatal knocks were heard at regular intervals of one or two minutes' duration; or over the doomed person fluttered the image of a white dove. As soon as the spirit had departed, the doors and windows were immediately thrown open, the clocks were stopped, the mirrors were covered; and it was held to disturb the repose of the dead, and to be fatal to the living, if a tear fell upon the winding-sheet. Thus, from the cradle to the grave, superstition and life went step by step together; nor did the former, even at the grave, relinquish its hold upon the minds of men.

Shaw, in his "History of the Province of Moray," records that when a corpse was "lifted," the bed straw on which the deceased had lain was carried out and burnt in a place where no beast could come near it; and it was thought that next morning might be seen in the ashes the footprint of that member of the family who would be the next to depart.

Pennant, in his "Tour in Scotland," relates that, on the death of a Highlander, the corpse being stretched on a board, and covered with a coarse linen wrapper, its friends laid on its breast a wooden platter containing a small quantity of salt and earth, separate and unmixed; the earth as an emblem of the corruptible body, and the salt as an emblem of the immortal spirit. All fire was extinguished where a corpse was kept; and it was reckoned so ominous for a dog or cat to pass over it, that the poor animal was immediately killed. He also describes a very singular custom, to which I have found no reference in any other writer, of painting on the doors and window shutters "white tadpole-like figures" on a black ground, designed to ex-

press the tears of the neighbourhood for the loss of any person of distinction.

In a Scotch village the funeral of one of its inhabitants is made the occasion of something very like a general holiday. Every decent villager, whether connected with the family of the deceased or not, puts on his black coat and top hat, and follows the corpse to the grave. Cake and wine are always served before the funeral procession departs.

Witchcraft was associated in Scotland with numerous singular observances. The farmers, to protect their cattle against its malefic influence, placed rowan boughs and sprays of honeysuckle in their byres on the second of May. To preserve the milk of their cows they tied red threads about them, and, when they got the chance, to defend themselves from evil charms, they bled the unfortunate woman whom they supposed to be a witch. No faith was more firmly rooted in the mind of the Scotch peasant in the seventeenth century than the belief in witches and warlocks, and the potency of their enchantments. Everything that went awry, in cottage or barn, in byre or meadow, every disease that affected men and women, every murrain that befell cattle, the scantiness of the crops, the unseasonableness of the weather, was attributed to witchcraft.

A whole country-side would go in terror of the witch's power. In the reign of James the First, who was himself a firm believer in it, Scotland was given over to a mania about witchcraft, and reputed witches were hanged or burnt or drowned in great numbers. Greenside, in Edinburgh, was the scene of many of these judicial murders. In Aberdeen they took place at the market cross. The last execution in the south of Scotland was at Paisley in 1696, when one of the victims, a young and handsome woman, when asked why she did not defend herself with more ardour, replied: "My persecutors have destroyed my honour, and my life is no longer worth the pains of defending." In the north of Scotland an execution took place as late as June, 1727. But the following instance of credulity is of a still later date. A worthy citizen of Thurso, having for a long time been tormented by witches under the usual form of cats, broke out one day into such a storm of wrath, that one night he attacked them with his broadsword, and cut off the leg of one less nimble than the rest. On taking it up he discovered, to his intense surprise,

that it was a woman's leg; and next morning he discovered its owner in the person of an aged crone, whom his hasty action had crippled for life.

That fancies so wild as these, and habits and practices of such extravagance, should have existed in Christian Scotland among an intelligent population down to a comparatively recent date, might be matter of wonder if we were not aware of the tenacity with which men cling to the "use and wont" of the past. Nor, offensive as some of these may seem from a moral point of view, and trivial as are others, is it wise to treat them too contemptuously. For this at least they help to prove—the difficulty humanity has felt in realising to itself the idea of a living, personal God and Father, ever watching over the welfare of His children, chastening them for their good, but never refusing them the light of His countenance when they seek Him with faith in the hour of sorrow and darkness. Because unable or unwilling to keep clearly before their minds this consoling and strengthening idea, they have yielded to the follies of superstitious credulity; have put their trust in omens and charms and incantations, and have invented the diablerie of witchcraft, in the vain hope of deciphering the riddles of the future, and averting the blows of destiny. But we must not, as I have hinted, deal too sharply with the follies and failings of those who have gone before us. We too have our weaknesses, our superstitions; we too make our petty attempts to read the secrets of the coming years, and presume to speculate on the mysteries of the world unseen. We too are slow to remember that God is Love; to remember the Divine Fatherhood, and to put our unfeeling trust in His inexhaustible tenderness, His patience, and His ever-watchful care.

SPRING.

As sometime after deathlike swoon
The life, that in the inmost cell
Of Being keeps her citadel,
Flows out upon the death around,
Flows out and slowly wins again
Along the nerve-way's tangled track,
Inch after inch her kingdom back
To sense of subtly joyous pain;
Till he that in the silent room
With hot hands chafes her finger-tips,
And lays his warm lips on the lips
Whose cold bath quenched his life in gloom,
Feels all at once a fluttering breath,
And in her hands an answering heat,
Feels the faint, far-off pulses beat,
And knows that this is life from death—

So in the arterial, profound
Mysterious pathways of the earth,
New life is yearning to its birth,
New pulses beat along the ground.

A rosy mist is o'er the trees,
The first faint flush of life's return,
The firm-clenched fingers of the fern
Unclasp beneath the vernal breeze.

Where late the plough with coulter keen
Tossed the grey stubbles into foam,
The upland's robe of russet loam
Is shot with woof of tender green.

And here and there a flow'et lifts
A milk-white crest, a sudden spear,
Through those dead leaves of yester-year
That moulder in the hedgerow drifts.

And as I gaze on earth and skies
New waking from their winter sleep,
Strange thrills into my being creep
From that great life that never dies.

Low voices of the cosmic Soul
Breathe softly on my spirit's ear,
And through earth's chaos whisper clear
The meaning of her tangled whole.

That deep beneath that seeming strife
Where all things ever deathward draw,
There lives and works the larger law
Whose secret is not death but life!

MRS. RIDDLE'S DAUGHTER.

A COMPLETE STORY.

MR. CHARLES KEMPSTER WRITES TO
MR. DAVID CHRISTIE.

WHEN they asked me to spend the Long with them, or as much of it as I could manage, I felt more than half disposed to write and say that I could not manage any of it at all. Of course a man's uncle and aunt are his uncle and aunt, and as such I do not mean to say that I ever thought of suggesting anything against Mr. and Mrs. Plaskett. But then Plaskett is fifty-five if he's a day, and not agile, and Mrs. Plaskett always struck me as being about ten years older. They have no children, and the idea was that, as Mrs. Plaskett's niece—Plaskett is my mother's brother, so that Mrs. Plaskett is only my aunt by marriage—as I was saying, the idea was that, as Mrs. Plaskett's niece was going to spend her Long with them, I, as it were, might take pity on the girl, and see her through it.

I am not saying that there are not worse things than seeing a girl, single-handed, through a thing like that, but then it depends upon the girl. In this case, the mischief was her mother. The girl was Mrs. Plaskett's brother's child; his name was Riddle. Riddle was dead. The misfortune was that his wife was still alive. I had never seen her, but I had heard of her ever since I was breeched. She is one of

those awful Anti-Everythingites. She won't allow you to smoke, or drink, or breathe comfortably, so far as I understand. I dare say you've heard of her. Whenever there is any new craze about, her name always figures in the bills.

So far as I know, I am not possessed of all the vices. At the same time, I did not look forward to being shut up all alone in a country house with the daughter of a "Woman Crusader." On the other hand, Uncle Plaskett has behaved, more than once, like a trump to me; and, as I felt that this might be an occasion on which he expected me to behave like a trump to him, I made up my mind that I would sample the girl and see what she was like.

I had not been in the house half an hour before I began to wish I hadn't come. Miss Riddle had not arrived, and if she was anything like the picture which my aunt painted of her, I hoped that she never would arrive—at least, while I was there. Neither of the Plasketts had seen her since she was the merest child. Mrs. Riddle never had approved of them. They were not Anti-Everythingite enough for her. Ever since the death of her husband she had practically ignored them. It was only when, after all these years, she found herself in a bit of a hole, that she seemed to have remembered their existence. It appeared that Miss Riddle was at some Anti-Everythingite college or other. The term was at an end. Her mother was in America, "Crusading" against one of her aversions. Some hitch had unexpectedly occurred as to where Miss Riddle was to spend her holidays. Mrs. Riddle had amazed the Plasketts by telegraphing to them from the States to ask if they could give her house-room. And that forgiving, tender-hearted uncle and aunt of mine had said they would.

I assure you, Dave, that when first I saw her you might have knocked me over with a feather. I had spent the night seeing her in nightmares—a lively time I had had of it. In the morning I went out for a stroll, so that the fresh air might have a chance of clearing my head. And when I came back there was a little thing sitting in the morning-room talking to Aunt—I give you my word that she did not come within two inches of my shoulder. I do not want to go into raptures. I flatter myself I am beyond the age for that. But a sweeter-looking little thing I never saw! I was wondering who she might be, when my aunt introduced us.

"Charlie, this is your cousin, May Riddle. May, this is your cousin, Charlie Kempster."

She stood up—such a dot of a thing! She held out her hand—she found fours in gloves a trifle loose. She looked at me with her eyes all laughter—you never saw such eyes, never! Her smile, when she spoke, was so contagious, that I would have defied the surliest man alive to have maintained his surliness when he found himself in front of it.

"I am very glad to see you—cousin."

Her voice! And the way in which she said it! As I have written, you might have knocked me down with a feather.

I found myself in clover. And no man ever deserved good fortune better. It was a case of virtue rewarded. I had come to do my duty, expecting to find it bitter, and, lo, it was very sweet. How such a mother came to have such a child was a mystery to all of us. There was not a trace of humbug about her. So far from being an Anti-Everythingite, she went in for everything, strong. That hypocrite of an uncle of mine had arranged to revolutionise the habits of his house for her. There were to be family prayers morning and evening, and a sermon, and three-quarters of an hour's grace before meat, and all that kind of thing. I even suspected him of an intention of locking up the billiard-room, and the smoke-room, and all the books worth reading, and all the music that wasn't "sacred," and, in fact, of turning the place into a regular mausoleum. But he had not been in her company five minutes, when bang went all ideas of that sort. Talk about locking the billiard-room against her! You should have seen the game she played. And sing! She sang everything. When she had made our hearts go pit-a-pat, and brought the tears into our eyes, she would give us comic songs—the very latest. Where she got them from was more than we could understand; but she made us laugh till we cried—Aunt and all. She was an Admirable Crichton—honestly. I never saw a girl play a better game of tennis. She could ride like an Amazon. And walk—when I think of the walks we had together through the woods, I doing my duty towards her to the best of my ability, it all seems to have been too good a time to have happened in anything but a dream.

Do not think she was a rowdy girl, one of these "up-to-daters," or fast. Quite the other way. She had read more books than

I had—I am not hinting that that is saying much, but still she had. She loved books, too; and, you know, speaking quite frankly, I never was a bookish man. Talking about books, one day when we were out in the woods alone together—we nearly always were alone together!—I took it into my head to read to her. She listened for a page or two; then she interrupted me.

"Do you call that reading?" I looked at her, surprised. She held out her hand. "Now let me read to you. Give me the book."

I gave it to her. Dave, you never heard such reading. It was not only a question of elocution; it was not only a question of the music that was in her voice. She made the dry bones live. The words, as they proceeded from between her lips, became living things. I never read to her again. After that, she always read to me. She read to me all sorts of things. I believe she could even have vivified a leading article.

One day she had been reading to me a pen picture of a famous dancer. The writer had seen the woman in some Spanish theatre. He gave an impassioned description—at least, it sounded impassioned as she read it—of how the people had followed the performer's movements with enraptured eyes and throbbing pulses, unwilling to lose the slightest gesture. When she had done reading, putting down the book, she stood up in front of me. I sat up to ask what she was going to do.

"I wonder," she said, "if it was anything like this—the dance which that Spanish woman danced."

She danced to me. Dave, you are my "fidus Achates," my other self, my chum, or I would not say a word to you of this. I never shall forget that day. She set my veins on fire. The witch! Without music, under the greenwood tree, all in a moment, for my particular edification, she danced a dance which would have set a crowded theatre in a frenzy. While she danced, I watched her as if mesmerised; I give you my word I did not lose a gesture. When she ceased—with such a curtsy!—I sprang up and ran to her. I would have caught her in my arms; but she sprang back. She held me from her with her outstretched hand.

"Mr. Kempster!" she exclaimed. She looked up at me as demurely as you please.

"I was only going to take a kiss," I cried. "Surely a cousin may take a kiss."

"Not every cousin—if you please."

With that she walked right off, there and then, leaving me standing speechless, and as stupid as an owl.

The next morning as I was in the hall, lighting up for an after breakfast smoke, Aunt Plaskett came up to me. The good soul had trouble written all over her face. She had an open letter in her hand. She looked up at me in a way which reminded me oddly of my mother.

"Charlie," she said, "I'm so sorry."

"Aunt, if you're sorry, so am I. But what's the sorrow?"

"Mrs. Riddle's coming."

"Coming? When?"

"To-day—this morning. I am expecting her every minute."

"But I thought she was a fixture in America for the next three months."

"So I thought. But it seems that something has happened which has induced her to change her mind. She arrived in England yesterday. She writes to me to say that she will come on to us as early as possible to-day. Here is the letter. Charlie, will you tell May?"

She put the question a trifle timidly, as though she were asking me to do something from which she herself would rather be excused. The fact is, we had found that Miss Riddle would talk of everything and anything, with the one exception of her mother. Speak of Mrs. Riddle, and the young lady either immediately changed the conversation, or she held her peace. Within my hearing, her mother's name had never escaped her lips. Whether consciously or unconsciously, she had conveyed to our minds a very clear impression that, to put it mildly, between her and her mother there was no love lost. I, myself, was persuaded that, to her, the news of her mother's imminent presence would not be pleasant news. It seemed that my aunt was of the same opinion.

"Dear May ought to be told, she ought not to be taken unawares. You will find her in the morning-room, I think."

I rather fancy that Aunt and Uncle Plaskett have a tendency to shift the little disagreeables of life off their own shoulders on to other people's. Anyhow, before I could point out to her that the part which she suggested I should play was one which belonged more properly to her, Aunt Plaskett had taken advantage of my momentary hesitation to effect a strategic movement which removed her out of my sight.

I found Miss Riddle in the morning-room. She was lying on a couch, reading. Directly I entered she saw that I had something on my mind.

"What's the matter? You don't look happy."

"It may seem selfishness on my part, but I'm not quite happy. I have just heard news which, if you will excuse my saying so, has rather given me a facer."

"If I will excuse your saying so! Dear me, how ceremonious we are! Is the news public, or private, property?"

"Who do you think is coming?"

"Coming? Where? Here?" I nodded. "I have not the most remote idea. How should I have?"

"It is some one who has something to do with you."

Until then she had been taking it uncommonly easily on the couch. When I said that, she sat up with quite a start.

"Something to do with me? Mr. Kempster! What do you mean? Who can possibly be coming here who has anything to do with me?"

"May, can't you guess?"

"Guess! How can I guess? What do you mean?"

"It's your mother."

"My—mother!"

I had expected that the thing would be rather a blow to her, but I had never expected that it would be anything like the blow it seemed. She sprang to her feet. The book fell from her hands, unnoticed, on to the floor. She stood facing me, with clenched fists and staring eyes.

"My—mother!" she repeated. "Mr. Kempster, tell me what you mean."

I told myself that Mrs. Riddle must be more, or less, of a mother even than my fancy painted her, if the mere suggestion of her coming could send her daughter into such a state of mind as this. Miss Riddle had always struck me as being about as cool a hand as you would be likely to meet. Now, all at once, she seemed to be half beside herself with agitation. As she glared at me, she made me almost feel as if I had been behaving to her like a brute.

"My aunt has only just now told me."

"Told you what?"

"That Mrs. Riddle arrived——"

She interrupted me.

"Mrs. Riddle? My mother? Well, go on!"

She stamped on the floor. I almost felt as if she had stamped on me. I went on.

"My aunt has just told me that Mrs. Riddle arrived in England yesterday. She has written this morning to say that she is coming on at once."

"But I don't understand!" She really looked as if she did not understand. "I thought—I was told that—she was going to remain abroad for months."

"It seems that she has changed her mind."

"Changed her mind!" Miss Riddle stared at me as if she thought that such a thing was inconceivable. "When did you say that she was coming?"

"Aunt tells me that she is expecting her every moment."

"Mr. Kempster, what am I to do?"

She appealed to me, with outstretched hands—actually trembling, as it seemed to me, with passion—as if I knew, or understood her either!

"I am afraid, May, that Mrs. Riddle has not been to you all that a mother ought to be. I have heard something of this before. But I did not think that it was so bad as it seems."

"You have heard? You have heard! My good sir, you don't know what you're talking about in the very least. There is one thing very certain, that I must go at once."

"Go? May!"

She moved forward. I believe she would have gone if I had not stepped between her and the door. I was beginning to feel slightly bewildered. It struck me that perhaps I had not broken the news so delicately as I might have done. I had blundered somewhere. Something must be wrong, if, after having been parted from her, for all I knew, for years, immediately on hearing of her mother's return, her first impulse was towards flight.

"Well?" she cried, looking up at me like a small, wild thing.

"My dear May, what do you mean? Where are you going? To your room?"

"To my room? No! I am going away! away! Right out of this, as quickly as I can!"

"But, after all," your mother is your mother. Surely she cannot have made herself so objectionable that, at the mere thought of her arrival, you should wish to run away from her, goodness alone knows where. So far as I understand, she has disarranged her plans, and hurried across the Atlantic, for the sole purpose of seeing you."

She looked at me in silence for a moment. As she looked, outwardly, she froze.

"Mr. Kempster, I am at a loss to understand your connection with my affairs. Still less do I understand the grounds on which you would endeavour to regulate my movements. It is true that you are a man, and I am a woman; that you are big, and I am little; but—are those the only grounds?"

"Of course, if you look at it like that——"

Shrugging my shoulders, I moved aside. As I did so, some one entered the room. Turning, I saw it was my aunt. She was closely followed by another woman.

"My dear May," said my aunt, and unless I am mistaken, her voice was trembling, "here is your mother."

The woman who was with my aunt was a tall, loosely-built person, with iron-grey hair, a square, determined jaw, and eyes which looked as if they could have stared the Sphinx right out of countenance. She was holding a pair of pince-nez in position on the bridge of her nose. Through them she was fixedly regarding May. But she made no forward movement. The rigidity of her countenance, of the cold sternness which was in her eyes, of the hard lines which were about her mouth, did not relax in the least degree. Nor did she accord her any sign of greeting. I thought that this was a comfortable way in which to meet one's daughter—and such a daughter!—after a lengthened separation. With a feeling of the pity of it, I turned again to May. As I did so, a sort of creepy-crawly sensation went all up my back. The little girl really struck me as being frightened half out of her life. Her face was white and drawn; her lips were quivering; her big eyes were dilated in a manner which uncomfortably recalled a wild creature which has gone stark mad with fear.

It was a painful silence. I have no doubt that my aunt was as conscious of it as any one. I expect that she felt May's position as keenly as if it had been her own. She probably could not understand the woman's cold-bloodedness, the girl's too obvious shrinking from her mother. In what, I am afraid, was awkward, blundering fashion, she tried to smooth things over.

"May, dear, don't you see it is your mother?"

Then Mrs. Riddle spoke. She turned to my aunt.

"I don't understand you. Who is this person?"

I distinctly saw my aunt give a gasp. I knew she was trembling.

"Don't you see that it is May?"

"May? Who? This girl?"

Again Mrs. Riddle looked at the girl who was standing close beside me. Such a look! And again there was silence. I do not know what my aunt felt. But, from what I felt, I can guess. I felt as if a stroke of lightning, as it were, had suddenly laid bare an act of mine, the discovery of which would cover me with undying shame. The discovery had come with such blinding suddenness, that, as yet, I was unable to realise all that it meant. As I looked at the girl, who seemed all at once to have become smaller even than she usually was, I was conscious that, if I did not keep myself well in hand, I was in danger of collapsing at the knees. Rather than have suffered what I suffered then, I would sooner have had a good sound thrashing any day, and half my bones well broken.

I saw the little girl's body awaying in the air. For a moment I thought that she was going to faint. But she caught herself at it just in time. As she pulled herself together, a shudder went all over her face. With her fists clenched at her sides, she stood quite still. Then she turned to my aunt.

"I am not May Riddle," she said, in a voice which was at one and the same time strained, eager, and defiant, and as unlike her ordinary voice as chalk is different from cheese. Raising her hands, she covered her face. "Oh, I wish I had never said I was!"

She burst out crying; into such wild grief that one might have been excused for fearing that she would hurt herself by the violence of her own emotion. Aunt and I were dumb. As for Mrs. Riddle—and, if you come to think of it, it was only natural—she did not seem to understand the situation in the least. Turning to my aunt, she caught her by the arm.

"Will you be so good as to tell me what is the meaning of these extraordinary proceedings?"

"My dear!" seemed to be all that my aunt could stammer in reply.

"Answer me!" I really believe that Mrs. Riddle shook my aunt. "Where is my daughter—May?"

"We thought—we were told that this was May." My aunt addressed herself to

the girl, who was still sobbing as if her heart would break. "My dear, I am very sorry, but you know you gave us to understand that you were May."

Then some glimmering of the meaning of the situation did seem to dawn on Mrs. Riddle's mind. She turned to the crying girl; and a look came on her face which gave one the impression that one had suddenly lighted on the key-note of her character. It was a look of uncompromising resolution. A woman who could summon up such an expression at will ought to be a leader. She never could be led. I sincerely trust that my wife—if I ever have one—when we differ, will never look like that. If she does, I am afraid it will have to be a case of her way, not mine. As I watched Mrs. Riddle, I was uncommonly glad she was not my mother. She went and planted herself right in front of the crying girl. And she said, quietly, but in a tone of voice the hard frigidity of which suggested the nether millstone:

"Cease that noise. Take your hands from before your face. Are you one of that class of persons who, with the will to do evil, lack the courage to face the consequences of their own misdeeds? I can assure you that, so far as I am concerned, noise is thrown away. Candour is your only hope with me. Do you hear what I say? Take your hands from before your face."

I should fancy that Mrs. Riddle's words, and still more her manner, must have cut the girl like a whip. Anyhow, she did as she was told. She took her hands from before her face. Her eyes were blurred with weeping. She still was sobbing. Big tears were rolling down her cheeks. I am bound to admit that her crying had by no means improved her personal appearance. You could see she was doing her utmost to regain her self-control. And she faced Mrs. Riddle with a degree of assurance which, whether she was in the right or in the wrong, I was glad to see. That stalwart representative of the modern Women Crusaders continued to address her in the same unflattering way.

"Who are you? How comes it that I find you passing yourself off as my daughter in Mrs. Plaskett's house?"

The girl's answer took me by surprise.

"I owe you no explanation, and I shall give you none."

"You are mistaken. You owe me a very frank explanation. I promise you you shall give me one before I've done with you."

"I wish and intend to have nothing whatever to say to you. Be so good as to let me pass."

The girl's defiant attitude took Mrs. Riddle slightly aback. I was delighted. Whatever she had been crying for, it had evidently not been for want of pluck. It was plain that she had pluck enough for fifty. It did me good to see her.

"Take my advice, young woman, and do not attempt that sort of thing with me—unless, that is, you wish me to give you a short shrift, and send at once for the police."

"The police? For me? You are mad!"

For a moment Mrs. Riddle really did look a trifle mad. She went quite green. She took the girl by the shoulder roughly. I saw that the little thing was wincing beneath the pressure of her hand. That was more than I could stand.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Riddle, but—if you would not mind!"

Whether she did or did not mind, I did not wait for her to tell me. I removed her hand, with as much politeness as was possible, from where she had placed it. She looked at me, not nicely.

"Pray, sir, who are you?"

"I am Mrs. Plaskett's nephew, Charles Kempster, and very much at your service, Mrs. Riddle."

"So you are Charles Kempster? I have heard of you." I was on the point of remarking that I also had heard of her. But I refrained. "Be so good, young man, as not to interfere."

I bowed. The girl spoke to me.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Kempster." She turned to my aunt. One could see that every moment she was becoming more her cool, collected self again. "Mrs. Plaskett, it is to you I owe an explanation. I am ready to give you one when and where you please. Now, if it is your pleasure."

My aunt was rubbing her hands together in a feeble, purposeless, undecided sort of way. Unless I err, she was crying, for a change. With the exception of my uncle, I should say that my aunt was the most peace-loving soul on earth.

"Well, my dear, I don't wish to say anything to pain you—as you must know!—but if you can explain, I wish you would. We have grown very fond of you, your uncle and I."

It was not a very bright speech of my aunt's, but it seemed to please the person for whom it was intended immensely. She

ran to her, she took hold of both her hands, she kissed her on either cheek.

"You dear darling! I've been a perfect wretch to you, but not such a villain as your fancy paints me. I'll tell you all about it—now." Claspng her hands behind her back, she looked my aunt demurely in the face. But in spite of her demureness, I could see that she was full of mischief to the finger-tips. "You must know that I am Daisy Hardy. I am the daughter of Francis Hardy, of the Corinthian Theatre."

Directly the words had passed her lips, I knew her. You remember how often we saw her in "The Penniless Pilgrim"? And how good she was? And how we fell in love with her, the pair of us? All along, something about her, now and then, had filled me with a sort of overwhelming conviction that I must have seen her somewhere before. What an ass I had been! But then to think of her—well, modesty—in passing herself off as Mrs. Riddle's daughter. As for Mrs. Riddle, she received the young lady's confession with what she possibly intended for an air of crushing disdain.

"An actress!" she exclaimed.

She switched her skirts on one side, with the apparent intention of preventing their coming into contact with iniquity. Miss Hardy paid no heed.

"May Riddle is a very dear friend of mine."

"I don't believe it," cried Mrs. Riddle, with what, to say the least of it, was perfect frankness. Still Miss Hardy paid no heed.

"It is the dearest wish of her life to become an actress."

"It's a lie!"

This time Miss Hardy did pay heed. She faced the frankly speaking lady.

"It is no lie, as you are quite aware. You know very well that, ever since she was a child, it has been her continual dream."

"It was nothing but a childish craze."

Miss Hardy shrugged her shoulders.

"Mrs. Riddle uses her own phraseology; I use mine. I can only say that May has often told me that, when she was but a tiny thing, her mother used to whip her for playing at being an actress. She used to try and make her promise that she would never go inside a theatre, and when she refused, she used to beat her cruelly. As she grew older, her mother used to lock her in her bedroom, and keep her without food for days and days——"

"Hold your tongue, girl! Who are you that you should comment on my dealings with my child? A young girl, who, by her own confession, has already become a painted thing, and who seems to glory in her shame, is a creature with whom I can own no common womanhood. Again I insist upon your telling me, without any attempt at rhodomontade, how it is that I find a creature such as you posing as my child."

The girl vouchsafed her no direct reply. She looked at her with a curious scorn, which I fancy Mrs. Riddle did not altogether relish. Then she turned again to my aunt.

"Mrs. Plaskett, it is as I tell you. All her life May has wished to be an actress. As she has grown older her wish has strengthened. You see, all my people have been actors and actresses. I, myself, love acting. You could hardly expect me, in such a matter, to be against my friend. And then—there was my brother."

She paused. Her face became more mischievous; and, unless I am mistaken, Mrs. Riddle's face grew blacker. But she let the girl go on.

"Claud believed in her. He was even more upon her side than I was. He saw her act in some private theatricals——"

Then Mrs. Riddle did strike in.

"My daughter never acted, either in public or in private, in her life. Girl, how dare you pile lie upon lie?"

Miss Hardy gave her look for look. One felt that the woman knew that the girl was speaking the truth, although she might not choose to own it.

"May did many things of which her mother had no knowledge. How could it be otherwise? When a mother makes it her business to repress at any cost the reasonable desires which are bound up in her daughter's very being, she must expect to be deceived. As I say, my brother Claud saw her act in some private theatricals. And he was persuaded that, for once in a way, hers was not a case of a person mistaking the desire to be for the power to be, because she was an actress born. Then things came to a climax. May wrote to me to say that she was leaving college; that her mother was in America; and that so far as her ever becoming an actress was concerned, so far as she could judge, it was a case of now or never. I showed her letter to Claud. He at once declared that it should be a case of now. A new play was coming

out, in which he was to act, and in which, he said, there was a part which would fit May like a glove. It was not a large part; still, there it was. If she chose, he would see she had it. I wrote and told her what Claud said. She jumped for joy—through the post, you understand. Then they began to draw me in. Until her mother's return, May was to have gone, for safe keeping, to one of her mother's particular friends. If she had gone, the thing would have been hopeless. But, at the last moment, the plan fell through. It was arranged, instead, that she should go to her aunt—to you, Mrs. Plaskett. You had not seen her since her childhood; you had no notion of what she looked like. I really do not know from whom the suggestion came, but it was suggested that I should come to you, pretending to be her. And I was to keep on pretending, till the rubicon was passed and the play produced. If she once succeeded in gaining footing on the stage, though it might be never so alight a one, May declared that wild horses should not drag her back again. And I knew her well enough to be aware that, when she said a thing, she meant exactly what she said. Mrs. Plaskett, I should have made you this confession of my own initiative next week. Indeed, May would have come and told you the tale herself, if Mrs. Riddle had not returned all these months before any one expected her. Because, as it happens, the play was produced last night—"

Mrs. Riddle had been listening, with a face as black as a thunder-cloud. Here she again laid her hand upon Miss Hardy's shoulder.

"Where? Tell me! I will still save her, though, to do so, I have to drag her through the streets."

Miss Hardy turned to her with a smile.

"May does not need saving, she already has attained salvation. I hear, not only that the play was a great success, but that May's part, as she acted it, was the success of the play. As for dragging her through the streets, you know that you are talking nonsense. She is of an age to do as she pleases. You have no more power to put constraint upon her, than you have to put constraint upon me."

All at once Miss Hardy let herself go, as it were.

"Mrs. Riddle, you have spent a large part of your life in libelling all that I hold dearest; you will now be taught of how

great a libel you have been guilty. You will learn from the example of your daughter's own life, that women can, and do, live as pure and as decent lives upon one sort of stage, as are lived, upon another sort of stage, by 'Women Crusaders.'"

She swept the infuriated Mrs. Riddle such a curtsy. . . . well, there's the story for you, Dave. There was, I believe, a lot more talking. And some of it, I dare say, approached to high faluting. But I had had enough of it, and went outside. Miss Hardy insisted on leaving the house that very day. As I felt that I might not be wanted, I also left. We went up to town together in the same carriage. We had it to ourselves. And that night I saw May Riddle, the real May Riddle. I don't mind telling you in private, that she is acting in that new thing of Pettigrew's, "The Flying Folly," under the name of Miss Lyndhurst. She only has a small part; but, as Miss Hardy declares her brother said of her, she plays it like an actress born. I should not be surprised if she becomes all the rage before long.

One could not help feeling sorry for Mrs. Riddle, in a kind of a way. I dare say she feels pretty bad about it all. But then she only has herself to blame. When a mother and her daughter pull different ways, the odds are that, in the end, youth will prevail. Especially when the daughter has as much resolution as the mother.

As for Daisy Hardy, I believe she is going to the Plasketts again next week. If she does I have half a mind—though I know she will only laugh at me, if I do go. I don't care. Between you and me, I don't believe she's half so wedded to the stage as she pretends she is.

A LITTLE COQUETTE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Hilda Clifford became engaged to Lord Langridge, people held up their hands in astonishment at his choice and her luck. No one had ever imagined that Hilda would make such a match!

She was the daughter of a retired Colonel, and though considered fascinating, was not by any means pretty. Lord Langridge, however, was head over ears in love, and rapturously happy that Hilda had deigned to

accept him. The young lady in question was quite frank about her own feelings. When Lord Langridge was on the verge of proposing, she sat over the fire with her especial friend Lucy Gordon, and discussed the matter freely. She was wearing a new and expensive gown that afternoon, and fingered the costly stuff softly as she talked.

"This is mother's last effort at getting me married," she announced, with a sweep of the hand that included a coquettish hat and a set of furs that lay upon the sofa, just as she had thrown them off. "She has really spared no expense this time, Lucy. It will be very hard lines for her if Langridge does not come to the point after all."

"You have the oddest way of talking, Hilda! I wonder what Mrs. Clifford would say if she heard you."

"She would put things in a different light, no doubt," said Hilda negligently, "but when I saw that box I knew at once that this was my last chance, and I must grasp it."

"Your last chance! And you are only twenty-one!"

"I know, dear. But I am the kind that goes off very quickly," said Hilda resignedly. "In three years' time I shan't be fit to be seen."

"I wonder you have never got married before, you have such a way with you," said Lucy admiringly.

"I have cultivated that, dear. It has been the result of years of experience of mankind. I am not pretty, but I early determined to be fascinating."

"You have succeeded admirably. And I have heard you called pretty."

"That has always been my highest triumph. I am not good-looking for even two minutes together; but if I feel called upon to exert myself, I can make any man ready to swear that I am lovely."

Hilda looked into the fire for a moment and then laughed a little.

"Lord Langridge admired my hair the other day," she went on, "and I said, 'It isn't all mine, you know.' You should have seen his face! I told him that the older I got the more hair I meant to have. He looked awfully shocked. I do wish he wasn't quite so serious."

"How old is he?"

"For-r-r-ty," said Hilda, rolling her r's and her eyes at the same time.

"You like him, don't you, Hilda?"

"Oh, he is a pleasant little thing," re-

turned Miss Clifford, with a slight yawn. "I have no doubt he will let me have my own way in everything. He is going to propose to-morrow."

"How do you know?"

"I am going to wear a new frock, and mamma will leave the room to find her thimble, when he calls. She will be away a discreet space of time, and when she comes back I shall be wearing an enormous half-hoop of diamonds on the third finger of my left hand. Lord Langridge, who will have been sitting very near me, probably with his arm round my waist, will colour scarlet. And I shall explain things with graceful self-possession, and mamma will call me her dear daughter, and ask him to be kind to me, and——"

"Hilda, I do wonder you can talk like that! I think you are very unfeeling and——and horrid."

"It's the way I have been brought up that has done it," returned Miss Clifford, with a slight hardening of the mouth. "Upon my word, Lucy, there are very few things in heaven or earth that I respect or care for."

"I wonder how it will turn out? I shouldn't care to be in Lord Langridge's shoes."

"Ah, there you are wrong. I shall make him a model wife. I do respect him though I don't love him, and I shall be as affectionate as possible. When I die I shall no doubt be called 'a faithful and devoted wife,' on my tombstone."

"Have you ever had a spark of sentiment for any man?" asked Lucy, looking at her friend curiously.

"Oh, dear me, yes," replied Miss Clifford, raising her eyes, which were undeniably pretty, to the ceiling; "I have really cared for three or four."

"How tiresome you are, Hilda! You are never your real self even with me. I believe there was only one person who ever did understand you. And that was Captain Curwen."

The flickering firelight showed that Hilda had turned a little pale. But otherwise she did not falter.

"Captain Curwen was a very disagreeable person," she rejoined lightly. "He had a way of treating me as if I were six years old, and rather imbecile into the bargain. Oh, no, I couldn't possibly stand Captain Curwen."

"I shall always believe that you were cut out for each other, nevertheless," said Lucy determinedly; "and why he left for

India in such a frightful hurry, I never could make out."

Hilda stood up and stretched out her hand for her hat, which she arranged carefully and coquettishly above her dark curls.

"I think he went because he was annoyed with me," she said deliberately. "I believe the quarrel began about a hat he didn't like. Yes, on the whole I honestly believe he went to India because of that. It seems a trivial reason, doesn't it?"

"I don't believe it," said Lucy flatly.

"Oh, but it's true," said Hilda, disposing her costly boa round her neck, and surveying herself admiringly in the glass. "It was a pork-pie hat too, I remember. Poor Teddy Wick admired it very much, and asked me always to wear it when I went to meet him. Captain Curwen thought I was forward when I told the dear boy I should never wear any other since he liked it so much, and he said the hat was hideous. We had a desperate quarrel over it, and called each other all sorts of names."

"There was something more than that, I am sure."

"I dare say there was," said Hilda negligently; "but what does it matter now that it is over and done with?"

"He was desperately in love with you, Hilda, and knew how to manage you to perfection. A nice handful poor Lord Langridge will find you!"

"I hate to be managed. Captain Curwen was a dear, I admit, but I never remember any one who made me so cross."

"He was very good-looking."

"Oh, yes. A great improvement on my poor Langridge, I must say. I don't know how I shall stand those little side whiskers of his. And he will have to grow a moustache. I hate being kissed by a clean-shaven man. One might as well kiss a woman at once."

She paused for a moment, and then held out her hand.

"Good-bye, Lucy. Wish me joy."

"I wonder what will be the end of it," said Lucy, absently clasping the proffered hand. "You are just the sort of girl to have an exciting history and get into no end of scrapes."

"The end will be matrimony, and I am sure that is enough to steady the most skittish woman that ever lived."

"Marriage doesn't end everything, you know. Be careful, Hilda."

"I am going to be very careful—oh, desperately so for about six weeks. I shall make an arrangement with Langridge that I may burst out every now and then. I must have my day out like the housemaids."

"Oh, Hilda, don't marry him," cried Lucy fervently. "If you feel like that about it you will be miserable. Marriage isn't for a few hours or a few days; it is for the whole of one's life. Think of that, Hilda! The whole of one's life!"

"I don't want to think about it. Why should I bother myself about disagreeable things? There is nothing so bad for one's looks as thinking. It brings no end of wrinkles at once."

She went out into the hall with a light laugh. As Lucy opened the front door for her, she turned for a moment and kissed her cheek—a very unusual demonstration of affection on her part.

"I am not worth thinking about, Lucy," she said, "so don't worry your little head any more about me. I mean to marry Lord Langridge, and be very happy."

"If a determination to be happy will make you so," said Lucy, watching her friend go down the steps, "I dare say you will be one of the brightest people living. Only—it doesn't!"

But to this piece of philosophy Miss Olifford did not reply, and Lucy shut the door and went back to the fire with a little sigh.

"Poor Hilda!" she said to herself. "She is very wilful and very fascinating. She deserved a better fate. She is to marry a man she does not love. What could be worse than that?"

But Hilda, walking briskly along the country road, whose frost-bound surface was almost as hard as iron, was not wasting her time in self-pity. She was not at all sure that her fate was such a hard one. True, she had lost for life the man she had really loved, but she flattered herself that she had got over that loss, and was settling comfortably down into unsentimental common-sense. Langridge was rich, amiable, and tremendously fond of her. What more could a woman want in any husband? As his wife she would be high up in the social scale, and could satisfy every ambition. She meant to shine in society. True, there was always Langridge in the background, an unwelcome accompaniment of his wealth and his rank, but Hilda thrust the thought of him resolutely away, and occupied herself with him as little as possible. She

thought about Captain Curwen still less, and, in short, was in a very comfortable frame of mind altogether.

As she drew near home, and the pale wintry sunset was gilding the distant red roofs of the village cottages, she became aware of the fact that Lord Langridge himself was on in front. She had a good chance of surveying her future lord and master. His short, sturdy figure was as clearly outlined against the sky as was the lean, leafless skeleton elm-tree that looked black against the pale gold background.

Hilda moderated her pace a little in order to scrutinise him at leisure.

"Langridge is not beautiful," she said to herself critically, "but I am sure he must be very good. When we are married I shall have to stop his wearing those loud plaid trousers. The poor boy has no taste."

At this moment, something—instinct, perhaps—made Langridge turn round and see her. He immediately wheeled about and hurried towards her, his honest face beaming with delight.

"This is indeed a pleasure! Do you know, Miss Clifford, that I was on my way to see you!"

"So I imagined," returned Hilda, giving him a careless hand, "as this road has only one house in it, and that is ours."

By this time Langridge was walking beside her. Hilda noticed for the first time that she was taller than he, and reflected that this was a great pity. It would spoil the appearance of things when they went out together. Hilda was not partial to little men.

"How fortunate I turned and saw you!" pursued Langridge, with a delighted expression. "Fancy, if I had found you out when I called!"

"It would have been a frightful calamity."

"Frightful to me. I do not believe that you," with reproachful tenderness, "would have cared in the very least."

"Oh, I am not so inhuman as you think me. Since you have taken the trouble to walk over from the Abbey, I should have been really sorry to have missed you."

"How kind you are always! You almost make me believe sometimes that you like to be bored by my visits," said Langridge tentatively.

"You don't bore me—much!" said Miss Clifford, smiling at him.

The smile undid the severity of the words. Lord Langridge took fresh heart.

"It is a lovely afternoon," he remarked,

as the gables of Hilda's home rose in sight at the end of the long country road down which they were walking, "don't you think it is a pity to go in just yet?"

The words were commonplace enough, but they were spoken rather breathlessly. Hilda, skilled in these signs of coming events, reflected for a moment whether she would prefer Langridge to propose to her in a country lane or in the drawing-room at home. She decided on the country lane. There was less opportunity for the display of sentiment and emotion. She felt very little inclined for either this afternoon. Down the lane they accordingly went.

The daffodil sky was paling, and the air from across the fields blew fresh and clear. The beauty of the afternoon was waning quickly. Hilda looked at her companion steadily for a moment.

He was not a romantic figure. His good-humoured face was round and red, and boasted the little black side whiskers that Hilda abhorred. His gait was clumsy, and his figure the kind which is the tailor's despair. No fine clothes could ever make Langridge look elegant. Could she bear this short, stout, good-tempered little man as a lifelong companion? She sighed, and turned away her head.

Langridge, who had been nervously slashing at the leafless hedges with his stick, now gathered up his courage, and took the plunge.

"Miss Clifford—Hilda," he said with a final slash, that spoke volumes, "you must have known for some time what my feelings are for you. I am a bad hand at expressing these things, but the long and short of it is that I love you, and that I will have no other woman for my wife."

She did not answer, and he stole a look at the pretty profile under the big plumed hat.

"I know I am not fit for you," he went on humbly. "I am too old, and too serious, and too plain. But no handsome young fellow could ever love you more than I do."

He put out his hand and laid it on her muff, inside which her own were tightly clasped. She was quite surprised, now that the supreme moment had come, that she felt an irresistible desire to refuse, once and for ever, to become his wife. But she knew that the impulse must not be given way to.

"I fully appreciate the honour you are doing me, Lord Langridge," she said slowly,

her eyes fixed on a distant line of trees, "but——"

"For Heaven's sake, don't say that you are going to refuse me!" he broke in agitatedly. "I couldn't live without you. Indeed, I couldn't, Hilda. You have no idea how strong my feeling is towards you. And when you talk about my doing you an honour—you whose shoes I am not worthy to—to black," said Langridge, casting about him for a suitable simile—"you make me feel-terrified for fear that after all——"

He broke off again, his face working.

"Don't do it, Hilda!" he said imploringly.

This time she turned and looked at him, and their eyes met. The expression in hers was a little hard.

"I am not going to refuse you," she said slowly, "but I want to tell you something first."

"I could listen to you for ever!" cried her suitor rapturously.

"It is merely to say that I do not love you."

Langridge's face fell; and then brightened again.

"Of course, not as I love you. I

couldn't expect that at first. But I will soon teach you."

Hilda would have preferred having lessons from some one else, but she resigned herself to the inevitable. After all, what did it matter! She was not likely to love again.

"If you don't mind having me on those conditions," she said, abandoning her hand to him with a little smile, "why, then——"

He stooped and kissed her fingers, rapturously happy. He did not envy any man alive at that moment. The commonplace world became a glorified Paradise to him.

Half an hour later Hilda entered the drawing-room of the red-gabled house. Her mother was sitting there, busy with some fancy work. She looked up with enquiry on her face as her daughter entered the room.

Hilda's cheeks were a little pale. She undid her boa, and took off her hat.

"Congratulate me, mamma," she said, with rather an hysterical laugh; "the boa and hat have not been thrown away. They have done it between them. I have promised to marry Lord Langridge in six months' time!"

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By ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVI. A FRIEND'S VIEW.

THE old Palace was very silent during the following week. The servants walked softly down the long, lonely passages, sorrowing for the young master and bewildered by the helplessness of the old man whose life until now had been so active. It was the Duke who now took the direction of affairs, whilst Penelope sat with her father and attended to his wants. She was home again; the old love for the wild glen and for all the beauty of the mountains came back tenfold, but it now seemed to her mixed up with her love for Forster Bethune. She wanted to know how he would like to hear the dashing Rothery, and to watch the great bare hills and the more distant mountain-tops.

But underneath all this feeling was the terrible, oppressive thought, "I must marry Phillip Gillbanks, I must. I was always prepared for it, and I must obey my uncle. Why did I not do it at once, before I had seen Forster? then perhaps—would love have come? He is very kind, and he loves me. Perhaps it might have been otherwise, but now, now it is impossible to forget Forster; and yet I must, I must forget him."

She walked down the long passage and listened for the soft tread of the ghost, but she only heard the echo of her own foot-falls upon the stones. The ghost would not appear to her because she was going to demean herself. Then she thought that

she would marry Phillip Gillbanks, but that she would be as a stranger to him, and he must be as a stranger to her. His reward would surely be great enough if he could say that he had married the Princess of Rothery; that must suffice him. She hated his money, at the same time as she knew that it was necessary to the Winakells and the reason of her misery.

She made no preparations for her private wedding. She had brought back enough dresses from London to last many months, and she would wear one of them; which one seemed to her of no consequence. Her uncle, on the contrary, busied himself to make one part of the old wing at least temporarily comfortable and fairly weather-tight. The ghost's boudoir must be Penelope's morning-room, and there were several more rooms near to it which could be set apart for the young people. The village carpenter was set to work to make a few repairs, but not a soul, not even old Betty, was told the truth. It might shock their feelings; but then the Duke knew it was absolutely necessary. The settlement could not be signed till the marriage, and the principal could not be touched till Penelope became Mrs. Gillbanks Winakell. The Duke had insisted upon the family name being adopted by the purchaser of the Palace.

So during all those days Penelope went about hardening her heart against Phillip. His daily letter was sometimes answered by a few lines, chiefly on business, and she raised her head more proudly as she stepped out into the lonely glen, feeling that at least she was saving the lands; though the price to pay was heavier than she could have foreseen. Her face stiffened more and more into an expression of pride that was unnatural in one so young and so

little accustomed to the world. As she walked up and down the glen with her great dog Nero, she was very unlike a bride elect, and it was only in her uncle's presence that she made an effort to appear without the slight frown which was now almost habitual to her.

She wanted to know what Forster thought of her strange engagement, and yet she did not like to ask. The whole episode appeared like a dream, so sudden had been her departure from London. She blamed herself for having made a mistake, and she was angry with both Forster and Philip for having brought her into this miserable state of mind. Once she had hoped to return home full of the delight of an accomplished mission.

In the meanwhile Philip had hastened back to London to inform his friends of his happiness. Owing to certain transactions with the Duke and to the sudden death of Penelope's brother, no one but his father had been told of his engagement. He could hardly believe it himself. Indeed, he was overjoyed when he had found his suit encouraged by the Duke, and still more astonished when he had implied that his niece would certainly receive him favourably.

Philip did not guess the reason, for to him it seemed as if rich men of title, who were said to have proposed to the Princess, would certainly have been preferred to him. Had she wished it, of course Miss Winskell could have accepted much richer men than himself. Philip was not vain, and from this he could only conclude that Penelope loved him, and he was willing to believe that pride alone made her receive his advances with shy reserve. When she was his wife, then he would soon show her how entirely he loved her, and how willing he was to own her superiority. The death of the heir, the journey north, and the hasty decision of the Duke about the wedding, had not left Philip a moment in which to think of himself. When he reached London again, in his first moment of leisure he betook himself to the Bethunes' house to find Forster, in order to tell him the wonderful news.

Mrs. Bethune was in the drawing-room alone when Philip was shown in, and as usual she received him very cordially.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Gillbanks. It was only this morning that Forster was saying he could not imagine what had become of you, for you did not appear at the club on his special night ;

however, you must not let him become too encroaching. Forster forgets that every one cannot devote his life to the cause. I told him you had your sister to see after. He is coming in soon, so do wait for him. I don't know what has come to him lately. He is so very absent-minded. He introduced Adela as his wife the other day, and she had to pull his coat, and to tell him he really was not married."

"Forster is absent!" said Gillbanks, blushing as if the allusion were personal. "Indeed——"

"Dora says he must be in love. I can't fancy Forster being in love at all, can you?"

"Oh, no! I'm sure he is not in love."

"I am glad you agree with me, because, 'entre nous,' dear Mr. Gillbanks, I do dread Forster's taste in that line. He will fall a victim to some poor dear thing who can't find a good situation."

Philip laughed, and just then Forster entered. His face brightened at the sight of his friend.

Mrs. Bethune left the two together, and Forster began at once.

"I thought you were ill or lost. I was going round to your house this evening, Philip. You were so much wanted the other day."

"I'm so sorry. Yes, I ought to have telegraphed; but I wanted to come and tell you myself. Do you know, Forster—can you believe it?—she has accepted me."

"Who has accepted you?" said Forster, suddenly turning towards his friend.

"The only woman I should ask, of course—the Princess. But I've been living in a dream ever since; I can hardly believe it myself."

Forster sat down by his mother's writing-table, and pretended to be looking for some writing-paper.

"You have asked her to marry you? And she has accepted you? My dear Philip——"

Forster paused.

"Yes, it is extraordinary. I don't wonder you are surprised. I can hardly believe it myself, and report says she has had heaps of offers, so she——"

Forster still searched for paper, and for a few seconds his face was hidden. When he turned again towards Philip his face was paler, but he was quite calm.

"This is news. Yes, I am surprised. I can hardly understand it, but I wish you joy, Philip, of course, all joy. Tell me,

does she—no, I mean how long has this been going on? I saw her brother's death in the papers, and heard she had left town."

"Yes, indeed. It is awfully sad. I went with them to Rothery. It seems like a dream that I have really won her."

"Phillip, are you sure she——"

"Sure she accepted me! Yes, sure. Her uncle is most anxious that the wedding should take place at once, for this death has thrown everything into a hopeless state of confusion. The father is useless. He was nearly drowned. Such a queer old man! I have told you about him. Penelope really wants protection and some brightness in her dull life. Down there all seems so quiet and sad. Of course, I would rather have waited longer, so that she should know me better, but I have to obey the Duke."

"But this should not be," said Forster, trying to speak calmly. "Phillip, have you really considered it all round?"

"You did not know it was earnest, perhaps; but with me it was love at first sight."

"She is very beautiful, and she might become a great power, but she must learn to love you, Phillip. Are you sure——? No, I don't quite understand the haste, only I've no right to interfere. Does she know what a lucky woman she is?"

"Nonsense, Forster, the luck is all on my side."

"They are inordinately proud."

"They have a right to be."

"Right! No one has that right. But I am the loser."

"Only for a time. For the present I must give her all my energies. The old place wants repairing. I think she trusts me, and she believes in my love. Forster, if you had loved her, I should have had no chance. You are the only man really worthy of her, but I can't pretend to wish to give her up. She seems to me as if she were too good and too beautiful for this earth, and if it weren't for the Duke—— but he was entirely on my side, and she trusts him immensely."

"Forgive me, Phillip, but is she marrying you because the Duke tells her to do so?" said Forster slowly.

"Why should you ask that? She might marry any one. I have to see after many things before the wedding. I'm not allowed to ask even you to it, Forster, so that I shall indeed feel very privately

married! The brother's death naturally makes all this imperative."

Forster once more turned away; then suddenly he put his hand on Phillip's shoulder.

"Phillip, don't do this thing. You don't know her enough; besides, there is the work. You will never return to it."

Phillip laughed. It was so like Forster to think "the Cause" came before anything else.

"I know I'm an unprofitable servant; but, indeed, Forster, you must be a little pitiful to the weak. I can't live without her. Of course it's horridly sudden, but that is the Duke's doing and hers. I have it in black and white."

"I'm a fool to try and show you the danger. I don't know if Penelope Winskell can love any one. She is one of those women one reads of sometimes, who can destroy but cannot create love. She could love but once. Phillip, give her up."

"The higher call is not for me," said Phillip humbly. "I wish I'd confided sooner in you, but it seemed like saying one wanted to propose to an angel from heaven. She is so self-contained and so beautiful; she is like no other woman I have ever met."

"That is true, she might have become——"

"Yes, one of your best disciples; I know I am depriving you of that homage, Forster, but her uncle assured me she was not really averse to marriage, only very difficult to please. Imagine what a miracle it is that I can please her, and that she can even put up with me, but it's true. Forster, wish me joy even if I have disappointed you."

"One word more, Phillip. Have you forgotten that you are rich? Forgive me, but I can't believe she is worthy of you. Is it possible that——"

Phillip Gillbanks reddened and looked hurt.

"Forster! What an idea! Of course the Winskells are poor, and my money is entirely at their service; but to think my Princess cares for filthy lucre is ludicrous. If she did there was no reason why she should not have accepted Vernon Heath. He is fabulously rich."

"Heath! Did he want to marry her?" Forster's face expressed disgust.

"I can't stay any longer. The Duke wants me to do some business for him."

"All right. Look here, Philip, you are the most unselfish man in creation, but you know what I think about it. I hate the whole business. These wretched Dukes and Kings who play at——"

But Philip was gone.

"My Princess has thought me worthy of her," he said to himself, as with a smiling face he went about London to do the Duke's bidding.

CHAPTER XVII. UNWELCOMED.

"WHAT, the Princess is to be married off no better than a gipsy!" cried Betty, when she at last heard the news. It was the evening before the wedding.

"There's no luck to a weddin' wid oald acquaintance," said Oldcorn. "Mister Gillbanks was a strange soight the furst neet he drew his chair to t' fire an' set hissel here. Ah dar say he thowt hissel t' happiest o' mortals, but, hooivver, afoor long he'll come sec a crack as ivver he knew when he startit here. Mister Gillbanks wud be a gay bit better minding his shop."

"His shop! As if he's got one!" said Betty.

"Soar they say. Gwordie heard it hissel."

"'Tis trading, you silly! His father is in the big line with something, but Mr. Philip himself is a big gentleman."

"I heear noo! His father and he is just the same. There's no King's blood in his body. An' alk! My stars! The Princess should a' wed a King."

"Money's the king now, Jim. Up in London I saw a sight o' things you know nothing about, and Miss Penelope couldn't have married in fine style now her poor brother's lying dead and hardly cold in his grave."

So spake the underlings, whilst the King, whose mind was becoming somewhat clearer and his temper more cross-grained, began bitterly to reproach the Duke. If the estate were saved, it would be at the expense of a marriage with one who could boast of no drop of blue blood.

The Duke alone was firm. He had weighed all carefully. He knew full well that his niece might have married an aristocrat, but that not one of them would have propped up the ruined house of Rothery. Only Philip Gillbanks's love had stood the test.

The Duke was a man of the world. In his heart he disliked a mésalliance as much

as did his niece, but such things were now done every day, and the misfortune must be borne with true courage.

Penelope had offered no remonstrance. His one fear had been that she would not ratify his choice; but she had said nothing, and he was proud of the Princess. She understood the meaning of self-sacrifice as well as he did, when great difficulties had to be faced.

On this grey evening the chill autumn feeling had crept into the air, making the Rothery glen sad in its beauty, as Penelope stepped out. The old dog followed her as if he understood her feelings, his tail between his legs, and keeping close beside her instead of bounding forward along his favourite paths.

As she came out of the Palace the Princess noted many things around her as if she were seeing them for the last time. Near the front door, and on the spot where the distant lake could be seen, her eyes first rested upon old Jim Oldcorn, standing near the King's wheel-chair. The old man could not endure to stay indoors, but preferred being brought out, so that like a wounded lion he could still watch the scenes of his many exploits. His language was even less choice than of old, and patience was a virtue he held in contempt, so he sat growling to himself and cursing the fatal accident that had deprived him of his son and of his own great strength. He had never cared much for Penelope, and now the sight of her often seemed to bring on a fit of temper. Faithful Jim Oldcorn, like a sturdy oak, could bear much and could weather any storm which the King raised. No opprobrious title hurled at him by his master appeared to disturb his placid temper.

"Who's that?" growled the King as he heard Penelope shut the hall door.

"It's noboddy but the Princess," said Jim calmly; "do ye want any transakhuns with her?"

"Tell her to come here," said the King, seasoning his remark with a few oaths; but Penelope was already approaching of her own accord.

"Jim Oldcorn, if any one comes and enquires for me, say I am in the glen," she remarked somewhat imperiously.

Jim nodded and moved away a few steps as he muttered to himself:

"Ah wadn't tis mesel' ta neahbody if ah didn't like him. He'll a' a strange bride, but it sarret him reet. There's no mixin' sma' beer with the King's wine."

"Come close to me, Penelope. Curse it! I'm a mere wreck, and my hearing is getting bad. What does Greybarrow mean by all this fooling? He says I gave my consent. If I did it's because you were only a woman; but my lad's gone now, gone—he'd have saved the old place."

"Would he?" said Penelope coldly, though the colour rose to her cheeks. "You know, father, that he would and could do nothing of the kind. As for your consent, you care little enough. You have never troubled yourself about me, because I was only a woman."

"I wanted sons and I had but one—but one, and he's taken from me. The parson came and preached resignation. The devil take him, he hasn't lost a son. What does he know about it? I would have set the dog on him if I could. He knew I was tied, or he never would have dared to come and preach to me."

"Is that all you wanted to say?"

The old man paused and looked up at this proud daughter. Her pride equalled his own. It could not be crushed, and therefore he hated her. He collected his thoughts a little, and then burst forth again.

"No, I wanted to tell you that this pale-faced milksop whom you have promised to marry has no right to come here. I won't have him near me, so keep him out of my sight. If you will go your own way, I will have none of him. A tradesman, too, a man of no birth, and you demean yourself to marry him. Your aunt would never have fallen so low."

"I have promised to marry Philip Gillbanks because it will save the property of the Winskells," said Penelope proudly.

"Save it! I could save it. You think your interference was wanted. I tell you that at the right time the property would not have been sold."

Penelope laughed scornfully.

"I trusted my uncle. Happily he has known how to help me and how to preserve the old rights."

"You have sold the land of your fathers to a man of low birth. Heaven forgive you, Penelope."

"I have not done so," she answered, clenching her hand, but too proud to show the anger she felt. "Everything that is done will be done in my name. A Winskell alone shall save the property."

"And how will you save yourself? Get along with you, Penelope. You are no daughter of mine. If you and Greybarrow

choose to meddle, you must go your own way, and the devil go with you."

Penelope walked away, and old Nero followed her as a mute follows a coffin.

She entered the glen, and here the roar of the Rothery appeared to harmonise with the wild tumult of her brain. Her father she had never loved, but he was her father, and something in the very fierceness of his impotent rage seemed to unite her to him and to make his words sting because of their truth. How could she have done this thing so lightly? Now that the time was come it seemed terrible. She did not love Philip; she hated him, because she had learnt what love meant. An evil fate in the form of love had come to chastise her for fancying she could do this thing in her own strength of character.

She followed the path in its ascent towards the higher land, keeping always close to the noisy roar of the Rothery, feeling as if she were pursued by her father's curses. Her uncle, who alone could have soothed her, was gone to meet Philip. It was sixteen miles to the nearest railway station, and when he came back Philip would be with him.

At last she reached the end of the glen, and gazed at the distant mountains. Grey clouds were slowly passing over the valleys, and occasionally a gleam broke through the grey masses, then quickly faded away again. The mountain-tops looked very, very far away, and all around was sadness which seemed to wrap the whole of her being in wordless despair.

"How can I save myself?" she repeated softly several times. "How can I? There must be some way. Why should I be sacrificed when my father does not even thank me for it? Why not let it all go? It is not too late even now. Let us be beggars, but let me be Forster's wife. He cares nothing about money. He cannot understand the pride of the old traditions. In that he fails. Yes, he fails: I am stronger than he is, and I will be strong unless I can find some way out of it."

She rested her arms on the top of the little gate and gazed out upon the open land. The voice of the Rothery was quiet here. It had but a child's voice, and had not yet been seized with the mad rage which possessed it lower down.

"I will save myself. I will. He will be too weak to resist."

Her lip curled in scorn of Philip Gillbanks, and she pressed her hand against her burning forehead.

"Forster would have been my master; this man shall be my slave," and the last trace of softness disappeared from the beautiful face.

How long she stayed there she never knew. The glen seemed full of strange shapes flitting about. A hawk poised on apparently motionless wing far above her on the bare hillside, and a lark flew up to sing one last evening song of unpremeditated joy. A little eft wriggled across the path, and a large bird flew noisily above her.

Suddenly she seemed to feel an irresistible power forcing her to turn and look back down the darkening glen. She resisted the feeling as long as she could, but at last she turned round and gazed down the path. He was there, she saw him coming, shadowy at first, then clearer. A tall man, with the honest, firm step of one who fears nothing and hopes everything. For one moment Penelope allowed herself to believe that it was Forster Bethune—only for one moment—then all her being revolted at the step she was going to take, and an evil pride took possession of her. By that sin fell the angels, and Penelope was a woman.

AMONG THE LITTLE PEOPLE.

WHEN Saint Patrick made a clean sweep of the reptiles in Ireland, he did not press the matter with the fairies. No doubt the good old saint saw that they would be sorely missed by his simple peasant folk; for the "little people" of the Irish interfere oftener for the good than for the evil of mortals. So, while the toads and the snakes plunged, at the saint's bidding, into the sea and swam mightily to gain Scotland's southernmost shore, the sprites held their tiny sides in laughter, and went back rejoicing to their raths and cromlechs, now more theirs than ever. And there they dwell, in the wood and in the meadow, on the hill and in the dale, and wherever the moonlight falls softly enough to dance upon and lights every drop of dew that hangs on flower or tree. Many there are who have no particular profession or dealings with man. They are content to drink the dew, and batten on the honey the miser bee has overlooked in his quest; to ring the changes on every peal of blue bells, whose chimes, we are told, come only as the fragrance thereof to mortals; they shout to make the drowsy daisy ope her eye to

the moon, and make the burnished buttercup a lordly helmet for their implish heads. And then their pranks! What delight it is to stop Paddy's pig at the four cross-roads as the two are returning benighted from the fair, and chase the unhappy animal every way but the right! Well does Paddy know it is the "little people" at their tricks, but he does not allow it to himself until the last, for he knows the chill sweat of fear that will break out on him when he is forced to confess the truth.

"Sure, 'tis the sperrits," he mutters at last, mopping his forehead with his red handkerchief, "an' be the Holy Vargin I'll be kilt befor' mornin' huntin' this divil, if I can't think of a prayer."

So, with head still uncovered, he hurries through an "Ave Maria" or a "Pater Noster," and, after crossing himself devoutly, buckles to the chase again. Then all is sure to go well, for the "sperrits" have respect unto piety, and will soon stop their pranks. Then they are off to the churchyard—the wild, overgrown churchyard, where anything and everything that can grow by itself, or creep and climb with help of its neighbours, is left to grow and creep and climb, wrapping the silent beds of the dead with a thick green mantle. There they play hide-and-seek round the leaning stones, and in and out of the shadows, and woe to the belated passer-by who omits to pray for the souls of the dead! He will be terrified by light footsteps following in his path, and, where the shadowy outlines of the sleeping dead are thickest—as it were some camp all wrapped in slumber until the day shall come—a faint, pale light shines, the corpse-light that fairy hands have lit to scare him. Should you seek to assure the awestruck narrator of this grisly adventure—for with the joyous light of day his fears will vanish, and he will be a hero, a nervous and, for the time, unhinged hero, but still a hero—that this dread light was naught but the phosphorus in the bones of his ancestors that have been rudely dug from their quiet cell to make room for a later arrival, he will turn an eye of scorn on you; "Arrab, whisht," he'll say, "sure, d'ye think I'm a fool entirely? Begorra, I saw it with the two eyes o' me blinkin' and winkin', and divil a wan but the sperrits it was that lit it! Posporus! Wissha, be aisy!"

In a small village in the South of Ireland there was a wooden-legged tailor of our acquaintance, whose homeward path led

through an old graveyard that lay round a ruined church. He loved spirits assuredly, but such spirits as he measured by nogginns when the property of another, and which he swallowed and measured—roughly—by inches when it was his own. His faithful spouse "Judy" always met her lord at the entrance to the graveyard, when he had been somewhat detained of an evening by society engagements. The stout knight of the needle would then settle his crutch firmly under his right arm, grasp "Judy" with his left hand, shut his eyes very tight, and request prayers for his mother, who lay buried near.

"Pray for me mother, Judy," he'd say, "pray for the sowl av me mother. Bad sorran to ye, Judy, if ye don't pray I'll hit ye a polthogue av me crutch!" Thus they twain passed through the dreadful night.

But these are a ne'er-do-weel lot who content themselves with practical jokes on all who fear or think evil of them. Others there are who have a profession, or mission to men. To the former class—the professional gentlemen—the Leith-phrogan (pronounced Leprachaun) belongs. He is the fairy cobbler, and, when the moon gives him light, he plies his trade diligently, seated on some little stone or tuft of grass in the dew-bespangled field. His mode of dress is uncertain, but he usually—in the South, at any rate—affects a high-crowned brown hat, with a little brown feather stuck in the front. His jerkin is of untanned mouse-skin, and his tights are of the same material. A pair of stout little brogues of his own making shield his fairy feet from the sharp-pointed grasses and pebbles, and a businesslike apron completes his working dress. And there he sits on the moonlit side of some hedge, crooning to himself in the ancient Irish tongue, and tapping away busily with his tiny wooden hammer. The sticky gum of the fir-tree is his wax to wax the spider's web withal that he may bind sole to upper; his nails are the prickles of the thistle; a stout thorn from yonder bramble-bush his awl. He it is who can tell where lies a hidden treasure, or even give to him who can hold him a purse of gold. Happy the wight who hears the busy "tap-tap" of the sprite's hammer and can dare to grasp and hold this little Proteus, who transforms himself into divers shapes to elude his captor. When he has done all he knows, and still is firmly grasped, he returns to his own form, and may be bound, but

only by manacles made from a plough chain or a clue of homespun yarn; and then he is content to buy his release by disclosing the treasure. But even then he will cheat mortal if he can, as the following chronicle—"An' divil a lie in it," said old Tim, when he finished—will show. Tim Flannigan was an old man when he used to tell us the story, but he never had varied one detail, and called all the saints down from heaven to bear witness to the truth thereof with a freedom that impressed the listener with the fact that the holy band were under a lasting obligation to Tim Flannigan of Ballymuck, and were only too glad to oblige him with their testimony to anything he asserted, especially in the matter of fairy cobbler.

"'Tis no lie I'm tellin' ye," he'd say. "It happened to me as true as I'm settin' here shmokin'. 'Tis nigh on thirty year back now, an' I was young thin," he'd add, with an air of one who foresaw contradiction, but was not going to stand it, "not more nor a fairish gossoon, but I was the divil of a likely bhoys. I tuk two boneens to the fair av Corrigeen that mornin', and sowed thim well, too, to a jobber from Cork—wan Murphy. You couldn't but know him, he's buyin' ahtill; he have a grey whiahker and wan eye turned to the north."

"But, Tim, about the fairy. Can't you—"

"Arrah, be aisy, an' I'll be tellin' ye. 'Twas half duskish, an' I laving the fair, an' whin I got to the cross-roads—where they bate Foxy Jack, the water-bailiff, for summonsing the bhoys that killed all the salmon—begorra, by that 'twas pitch dark night, on'y for the moon, an' it was as light as day. I tuk the near way through Biddy Mahoney's farm there, an' I was just goin' through the gap into the big field beyant the house, whin I heerd a sort of rappin' t'other side av the fence, like them thrushes—bad luck to the robbers—whin they welt a sheltie-head on a shtone to git at the mate av him. 'Glory be to God this night an' day,' says I to meself, 'an' is it ateing snails ye are now, ye thief of the world, whin ivery public-house is shut long ago, an' ye ought to be ashleep!' An' with that I wint up to the fence, threadin' as soft as a cat, to see the divil at his supper. But, be Saint Pathrick, if ye saw what I saw ye'd be dead long ago with the fright. There he was, the Leith-phrogan, settin' on a stone, an' knockin' the sprigs into a little

owld brogue he was mendin'. He was mighty busy with the job an' niver lifted his head, but wint on weltn' away an' singin' a bit, fine an' alsy, to himself. Be the holy poker, me heart made wan leap to come out av me mouth, but me swalla' was too dry for to let anything up, or, begorra, down ayther, an' back it fell agin to the bottom o' me stomach, an' stopped there. 'Cop the blackguard, Tim dear!' says I to meself, an' wid that I threw me owld hat over him, an' leppin' over the few stones there was in the gap, I put wan hand on the crown av the caubeen an' with the other I took a houl't av me lad under-nathe it an' pulled him out. Arrah, don't be talkin', 'tis thin he had the scoldin'! He scolded an' blackguarded me most outrageous, an' iviry word av it in Irish. Thin he comminced plantin' little spalpeens of thorns in me fingers—faith, he'd got his pockets full of thim—an' diggin' holes in me fists wid a thorn he had for borin' the soles av his brogues. 'Have conduct,' says I, 'or, be the holy fly, I'll make porridge of ye're head agin a shtone.' Wirra! he let wan squeal, an' 'twas a scrawlin', scratchin' cat I had in me han's! But I prissed him tighther for that, an' he thried me wid iviry bashte he could think av, 'cept cows an' such; he always kept small. 'Give me ye're pot av gould,' says I, whin he was tired av changin' hisself into waysels an' rats an' other monsthera, an' was in the shape of a Christian wanst more—though, Heaven forgive me, I didn't mane he was a raal Christian. 'Give me ye're gould,' says I, shakin' the thief fit to bring his brogues off his feet. 'Tis buried below that thistle,' says he, pointing the vegetable out to me wid a han' like the claw av a rat. 'Be herrin's,' says I, 'I'll mark it for meself,' and wid that I whipped off me garther—for I had a fine pair av knee-breeches on me that Micky Doolan—rest his sowl this night!—had made an illegant fit for me afther me gran'father was buried, an' a nate pair av grey stockin's as long as me leg. No sooner did I give him his liberty than he went out like a candle, an' I niver see him agin, but I put the garther round the thistle an' was off like a Jack hare for a spade. Divl a sowl I told, an' at day-break I was there wid two spades an' a shovel an' a crowbar an' a pick, an' a sack to hould the money. First thing I saw in the field was a thistle wid me garther round it, an' I shtruck the spade in nixt it an' took wan look round—'the last look,'

says I, 'that I'll iver throw, a poor man.' Tare an' ages, what did I see! There was hundhreds av thistles in the field, an' iviry wan had a garther like mine around it! Sure, 'twould take twinty men twinty months av Sundays to dig deep undher thim all, an' all the parish would be there in the mornin' to know what I was diggin' Biddy Mahoney's field for. Begorra, I begin to chry, an' wint sthraight home to me bed an' slep' till broad day; an' iviry wan said I was dhrunk whin I spoke of it; but the holy saints of hiven know I hadn't a sup taken."

To doubt the veracity of Tim's story would be to put you everlastingly in his black books. He certainly believed it himself, and so did his neighbours. His account of the Leith-phrogan is what is generally accepted in the southern counties, but those who go deeper into the matter find in it a quaint allegory, probably of Druidical times. The little fairy cobbler is the type of industry, and would teach the unthrifty sons and daughters of Hibernia a healthy lesson: that the captor of the fairy must never let go his hold, no matter how the sprite changes his form, inculcates, we are told, oneness of purpose; while the only manacles that can bind him, the plough chain and the clue of homespun yarn, are emblems of the two chief industries of the country. The former symbolises thrift in agriculture—and to the farmer or peasant the Leith-phrogan disclosed the position of treasure hidden in the earth—the homespun yarn refers to the then especially lucrative employment of spinning, and to the merchant was the purse full of gold apportioned. By this quaint myth the peasant was encouraged to ply his industry in the fields, where he would ultimately win for himself a reward in gold; while the trader was to spin and sell his yarn, which would finally endow him with a purse of untold wealth.

It is hard for the Saesench to grasp how real their fairy lore is to the peasantry in Ireland. To them it is always possible that the Leith-phrogan may be seen cobblling the brogues for his brother elves. Indeed, many a one has heard him driving his nails in sole and heel, but he has been warned of the approach of mortal, and left the eager seeker seeking. They never are abroad in the moonlight but a fearful hope is present that the fairies are at hand, to be heard, at least, if not seen. But the terror of the unknown is very great, and Paddy, who never cares to

be far from his shanty after nightfall, is wont to bethink himself of a prayer or two when alone in the darkling fields or lanes. Any sudden noise or unusual sight in the dusk calls forth a burst of piety that, if it lasted, would entitle the startled sinner to a halo in the next world.

Another member of the fairy community is the Gean-canach (love-talker). He, unlike the Leith-phrogan, plies no trade, but is an artist, his profession being that of love-making. A good-for-nothing little imp is he, who frequents lonely valleys and lanes, and appears to the terrified milkmaid lurching along with his hat slouched over his wicked little eyes and smoking a "dhudeen." He never has been known to even enter into conversation with the frightened maid, who flees at the sight of him; but he is ever eager to show himself, and, no doubt, is somewhat affronted at the cold reception he always meets with. Many a time, in the lightsome summer nights, does Molly, the milkmaid, rush into the firelit kitchen, where the hens dozing in the coop by the door, and, perchance, an evil-looking donkey sulkily picking untidy mouthfuls from his heap of grass on the floor, all contribute their share to the civilisation of surroundings that banishes the eerie sensation of a supernatural presence. In she blunders, with her pale face buried in her apron, and seating herself with a tragic haste on the settle ejaculates: "Saints preserve us! The fairies are out to-night. 'Divil mind ye,' is her fond mother's comment, not, however, without an uneasy glance at the open door, "fitter for ye be knittin' a stockin' for himself within be the fire, than gladiatorin' down the boreen." "Himself," it may be explained, is the term by which the head of the household is known. Of course it is the rascally Gean-canach that has frightened Molly, and by this time he is sucking his dhudeen harder than ever, and apostrophising mortal beauty that does not appreciate his elfish proportions. Very unlucky is it to meet the little "love-talker," and he who is disconsolate for the love of a maiden fair is said to have met the Gean-canach. But he again has his lesson to teach to him who will learn; for he personates sloth and idleness, and the excessive pursuit of pleasure; and as he is of bad repute and unlucky to all who look upon him, so will the thrifless mortal who passes his time in love-making and smoking his pipe forfeit his reputation and become a companion to be avoided.

Unlike his cousins, the Leith-phrogan and the Gean-canach, the Clobhar-ceann is never found in the sweet-scented fields and under the silver-white moon. He takes up his abode in the dank cellars where wines grow old; and lurks in the black, dark corners where the fat casks screen him from a chance ray of light. When the night is deep he creeps out and clambers to the round back of a barrel. With fairy awl he bores a tiny hole, and sucks the wine through a wheaten straw. Thus he has been seen, lolling merrily snatches of racy ditties, made by the fairy bard who dwells on the hillside and writes songs for his brethren on the back of a poplar-leaf. Dearly the little tippler loves the cellar of a hard drinker, and in his cellar he drinks and sings the night through while good wine lasts. When Sleep, inconstant as his brother Death is constant, forsakes your pillow, then, at midnight, listen, and you will hear his sprill revelry coming faintly up through the darkness to your silent room.

Many members of the aerial throng keep watch and ward over treasure hidden in earth or water, or over the dead man's grave and stone, and the trees that overshadow it. Where a lonely tree rears his head apart from his brothers of the forest, in some empty waste, there is treasure hid, and through the night fairy sentinels pace about it, that no mortal hand may grasp the coveted gold. Fantastic shapes they take to scare away the daring wight who would essay to enrich himself with the mystic store. When the winds moan in the cold starlight there may be seen two huge black dogs sitting one on each side of the tree, or a black cat and a bull, joined in a strange fellowship, pacing round the sacred spot. And woe to him who cuts a branch or even breaks a twig! Fell disease or dire calamity will bring him to a speedy end. And many a little lake or spring has, too, in its cool depths untold treasure; but jealously does the White Lady guard it from profane hands. He who would peep and pry in dusk-time for glint of gold will be maddened by her white, sad face peering up through the green weeds and warning him away with a look that freezes the blood. The trees, also, that stand in God's acre, and the stones that mark where a man's head once lay, are their care. Misfortune is the lot of one who dares to disturb the deep sleep of death by breaking or dealing lightly with one of these.

But of all creatures of the spirit world that have dealings with men, the pitiful Bean Sighe—Anglicè Banshee—is perhaps the best known in Ireland. She is spoken of as being a fairy, but we would be more inclined to use the term spirit; for she is not one of the "little" people, but appears in the shape of a woman of human size. She may, however, safely be classed under the genus "good people," a euphemistic term which the simple peasant applies to all "sperrits." She is the woman "of the piercing wail" who foretells the death of some loved one by piteous weeping, which is heard, sometimes, for three nights before the death takes place; or by appearing suddenly, clad all in white, only, however, to melt from view in an instant with a mournful shriek.

Many old families have a Banshee specially told off to give warning of the approaching death of a member; and these are proud of their ghostly retainer, treasuring up the weird legends of her tidings of disaster shrilled forth under the cold moon. Indeed, she herself comes of an ancient stock as old manuscripts show.

When Meidhbh, the powerful Queen of Connacht, made her expedition long, long since against the Ultonians, a Banshee met her who foretold how that great slaughter of hosts would come to pass and many heroes on both sides would fall. To Connacht's Queen she came in the form of a fair woman who stood by the shaft of the chariot "with twenty bright polished daggers and swords, together with seven braids for the dead, of bright gold, in her right hand." Asked who she was and from whence, she replies: "I am Feithlinn, the prophetess of the Fairy Rath of Cruachan!" and again and again she cried to Meidhbh, "I foresee bloodshed, I foresee power." In another old manuscript the prophetess is recorded to have appeared, with less dignity, in the shape of a red and white cow, to a favoured champion warring against the ancient Cuchullainn. There she appears to have joined with her duties of prophetess the office of the Leannan Sighe—of which more anon—for, it is written, she was "accompanied by fifty cows, having a chain of bright brass between every two of them," a strange band, come to injure Cuchullainn; and their leader assumed the shapes of a black eel and of a greyhound, that she might the more easily confound and overcome him. But the Banshee of to-day comes only as the harbinger of death, fitting and sobbing

in the darkness round the doomed house, and disappearing with a shriek of despair from him who has the courage to look upon her.

The Leannan Sighe, alluded to above, was the familiar spirit that was wont to accompany the champions of old on their fighting expeditions, and often saved them when human aid was of no avail. This mysterious being—now lost sight of in fairy lore—was the Irish genius, who appeared to whomsoever it favoured in the shape of a person of the opposite sex; though to warriors it sometimes came in the form of a man who, invisible to the opponent, guided the weapon of his charge and shielded him from deadly strokes. It was a Leannan Sighe that rescued Eoghan Mor (Eugene the Great), King of Munster, from his enemies, by causing that the rocks and great stones on the field of battle should appear to them to be the men of Munster, so that they hewed and hacked at the stones instead of at their opponents. But this invisible ally has not, as has been said, lived through the ages as have the Leith-phrogan and the rest. If it had it would, no doubt, have taken up politics of late years as a pursuit offering the best field for exercising a bellicose partiality.

Yet there on the green hillside and in the old cromlechs dwell the fairy throng: the "little people" that love to shock the old puritan owl with their revels, and to punish the coward who shuts ears and eyes and hurries on if their merry laughter reach him, or the flashing of their fairy feet in the moonlight catch his eye. And there they will ever dwell while the simple peasant dwells with them, who loves to tell their pranks, treasures up their legends in his heart, and for whom they do exist a real people, with a real history and a real kingdom of their own.

THE RHINE FALLS IN WINTER.

BALE, at six o'clock of a January morning, after the run from Calais without change of carriage, may be said to be sleep-inducing. But I found my energies re-energized by the "café au lait" and warmth of the refreshment-room, with the buzz of a variety of travellers around me. There were men for Davos and men for St. Moritz among the crowd, and the one nearest to me at table seemed quite surprised that any Englishman should be at Bale at such

a time—in January—and not be on his way to the sunny, sweet-aired Engadine.

After breakfast I held brief communion with a railway official, well buttoned against the piercing air of the platform: the very engines were bearded with icicles, be it understood. Was Schaffhausen conveniently accessible, and could I return thence in time for dinner in the evening? There seemed no manner of doubt about it; in fact I had a choice of routes—I forget how many. Moreover, if I would allow the official to take my ticket for me, I might almost that very moment step into a train which would carry me speedily to Wintherthur, which was as much as saying to Schaffhausen.

This was irresistible. The obliging man brought me a third-class return, which, for a relatively small sum, allowed me to spend eight hours in the train. It would have been a tedious experience had I not travelled third class and been in a corridor car. For the day opened in a languishing way, with fog, and never fully revealed the brightness one expects in the South. Nor were the pines and red-tipped willows and birches of the nearer landscape very engrossing; nor, after a while, the green river courses and the shadowy, fat-sided houses and spires of this part of German Switzerland. Besides, the heat in the car was a thing to marvel at, contrasting it with the outer cold. Twice I moved gaspingly to different seats. But it was no use trying to escape the parboiling that the Swiss railway authorities think profitable for their clients. Wherever I went I found myself over a steam-pipe, which periodically let loose its vapour. Had I been a potato I should have been cooked in my jacket. As it was, I could only try my heartiest to become acclimatised, and in the meanwhile seek diversion in my fellow-travellers.

We were a red-faced company. I was early astonished by the prevalent blackness of eyes. The local cast of face was indeed rather Spanish than aught else; and largely Jewish also. I first got an inkling of this latter characteristic in the conduct of a youth, patently Semitic, who fastened himself into the most sequestered corner of the car and carolled to himself the canticles from a book in Hebrew type. My companions paid no heed to this amiable freak. At length, however, with a radiant countenance, the young man shut the book, yawned—it was an air for yawning—and proceeded to balance his cash. The blue-

hooded women, with baskets of eggs and poultry that protested against their travels; and the vigorous-looking men with double chins; who constituted the majority among us, chattered on, and no one but myself seemed to notice these significant traits in the young Jew's conduct.

At Wintherthur I was set down for an hour. The mist was cold and clammy, with a tendency towards positive rain. Wintherthur's large houses and factory chimneys did not look seductive. I preferred to sojourn in the refreshment-room, where the midday meal was beginning. The dish of the day was "erbsen" soup. Railway porter after railway porter came in and took his dish of it. I, too, yearned towards it in the abstract; but the foolish belief was on me that "erbsen" meant "worms," and I could not bring myself to try worm soup, though I had no doubt it was made palatable. Now I know better, and that it was simple, nutritious pea soup which swelled the bosoms of the different persons who indulged in it, and which, together with bread and beer, seemed to constitute so satisfying a meal.

Scenically, I suppose this is the least romantic district in Switzerland. And yet there is something pleasant about heavy-browed cottages, ochre or pale blue, and bulbous-spired churches almost tomato-red, contrasted with green pines and snow at its whitest. We sadly wanted a more gracious canopy of sky, however. But the Rhine soon came to give piquancy to the landscape. It travels hereabouts nearly as fast as an ordinary Swiss train, and its bottle-green waters, broken by many a rapid, are held between high banks wooded with trees, which in winter look snug in their foliage of dried brown leaves.

At Dachsen I left the train to walk to the Great Falls, and so on to Schaffhausen's old city. The air was bracing and the road as hard as iron. I could hear the water's roar in the distance. The sense of expectation grew keen. I knew that the aqueous tumult was in process in the valley before me, on the other side of which the huge shape of the pale Schweizerhof rises, [with its background of wooded hills, like a mansion for an emperor. In the season this hotel enjoys a gay time. Brides and bridegrooms come here for their honeymoons, to gaze from their windows upon Rhine's agitated waters lit by the moon's tender beams; and commonplace tourists of all kinds clatter in its halls. But January is not the season, or anything like it.]

Schloss Laufen brought this lesson home to me. The snow lay deep and unswept in its courtyard, whence the approach to the Falls on the southern side is made. The hotel-restaurant here had its shutters up, and having forced the heavy door unaided, I wandered for a minute or two from naked room to naked room, seeking a landlord or waiter in vain. No matter. The quaint little Laufen church with its red body and spire of tiles, red, blue, and green, was as good to see in January as in June, with its mellowed wooden porch and its graves set with little iron crosses. So, too, was the Schloss gateway, becrested, with the date 1546, legibly preserved on it.

But I had not come to Laufen to be disappointed, so I rang the castle bell loud and long. The Schloss guards this bank of the Falls and takes toll of a franc per person from visitors. In olden times perhaps its inmates did even worse things. Rhine's voice here might well outcry the voices of victims whom Schloss Laufen wished to be speedily and completely quit of.

It was comforting to see the door open in response to my summons. The lad who let me in was not abnormally astonished. He exacted the franc, drew my unheeding attention to the variety of useless articles in the hall adorned with pictures of the Rhine Falls, which were for sale; and then turned the key on me in the Schloss Gardens, so that I might wander at will down to the riverside and hold solitary communion with the elves and sprites of this most famous place. Almost immediately—and though I was a hundred or two feet over Rhine's level—the river's spray touched my face. The babble of course was terrific—far too much for the lungs of any but the best paid of clerici.

But the snow lay deep and untrodden here as in the castle courtyard—and there was ice under it that made the zigzagging descent awkward in places. There is a summer-house on a "rond-point" for the use of visitors. It has windows with diamond panes, blue, green, yellow, and crimson, so that looking through them at the Falls you may dye these latter any of the four tints you please. It has also a plaintive inscription inside: "Please, do not write your name on the wall, but in the strangers' book." The comma after "please" is most touching, and so is the Ollendorffian turn to the sentence from the middle. But the appeal seems necessary, though my countrymen are sinners in this respect far less than the Teutons themselves.

Even from the summer-house the scene was a great one. The Rhine is here about one hundred and twenty yards in width, and in a distance that might be covered by a stone's throw, it casts its waters nearly a hundred feet downwards. True, I did not see the spectacle at its grandest. Above the Falls the heads of rocks innumerable rose higher than the blue-green swirl of waters, and the river could by no means in January sweep through space with the fury it shows in early summer, with the first melting of the snow. Still, I had compensation for the diminished volume of the river in the extraordinary cumber of ice and snow in its midst. The spray in fact froze in the air and descended upon the trees of Schloss Laufen and the ice-boles of the Falls themselves in sparkling beads of hail. And the water thundered from one level to another, through and over ice palliads and excrescences of huge size, the turquoise tints of which were delightful to look upon.

Of course, however, I was not satisfied with this relatively remote view of the river's agitation. I descended to the water's level, in the heart of the turmoil, and in a shower of the frozen spray. Hence I could look across to the pinnacled islets which break the Falls midway, and which appear the most fearsome spots imaginable for investigation. And yet, had it been the season, I could have called for a boat, rowed to the base of the largest of these rocks, and clambered by a stone staircase to the canopied summit thereof. In summer this achievement would seem daring enough to those of weak nerves; yet, methinks, though the bellowing of the waters in January is less extreme, the added trial of ice on the rock steps would have made this ascent injudicious. Be that as it may, I could not accomplish it. I rang the bell for a boatman at the place indicated, and tarried for him in the snow and spray of ice. But he came not, as I might have expected, and I had to be content with the deed in fancy alone.

Schaffhausen claims to be supreme in Europe for the magnitude of its Falls. I suppose those of Tröllhätta on the Gotha in Sweden may, however, almost be bracketed with them. They have the advantage in height, and in the beauty of their banks far superior. But these Gotha Falls are spread over a distance of nearly a mile, whereas the Rhine at Schaffhausen does not mince matters. On the other hand, they can be appreciated with less effort than the Rhine Falls demand. Without a

boat one must fail to carry away an adequate idea of the tremendous volume of water thus hurled over and between the rocks which here interfere with the river's methodical progress towards the sea. From Schloss Laufen one has a thrilling close view of the left Falls; from Schloss Worth, on the other bank, of the Falls as a whole, at a distance of two or three hundred yards. But one ought to be in the heart of the hurly-burly to write its most vigorous impression upon the memory.

Here, as at Tröllhätta, there are mills and factories which borrow from the river's strength. They are not quite welcome, but they are inevitable. The right bank of the river, under the village of Neuhausen, resounds with the whirr of machinery, as well as the crash of the waters, and blue-jacketed artisans pass to and fro, thinking of anything rather than the river's picturesque commotion. I got into the midst of them at the dinner-hour, when I had had enough of the Schloss Laufen side, and had climbed to the castle gate again, to descend and cross the river by the railway bridge. Here I found cause to admire the energy and enterprise of a German tourist of the most common type—a knapsacked youth in a jaeger cap and jacket. He leaped two or three of the lesser runlets of the Falls, and after some discreet tackling scaled one of the rock pinnacles almost in mid-stream. For my part, though I would fain have enjoyed the view his courage obtained for him, I did not seek to emulate him. Several of the streams he had to cross were of red sewage matter, and the iced nature of the rocks seemed to put his adventure in the category of the foolhardy.

At Schloss Worth, had it been summer, I might have lunched or drunk lager beer in a balcony abutting on the river, with Schloss Laufen on its rock immediately opposite. But Schloss Worth's restaurant, like Schloss Laufen's hotel, was a wilderness. The best I could do was to sit to leeward here and smoke one pipe solemnly to the sprites who have the Falls in their keeping. From no aspect is the phenomenon more absorbing. The bridge rises above the Falls, and the vineclad and wooded heights over Flurlingen on the left bank top the bridge; Neuhausen on one hand and Schloss Laufen on the other complete the framing of this noisy picture.

Two hours were soon spent thus. It behoved me indeed to hurry towards Schaffhausen for the afternoon train, in

which I was to be carried saunteringly back to Bâle. From the heights of Neuhausen, level with the assuming Schweizerhof in its woods and gardens—now all snow-decked—I had one more charming view of what I had journeyed to see. Then I gave myself up to the hard highway, with its bullock-drawn carts, its little school-maids with flaxen pig-tails, and its many cafés and restaurants, each with a name that borrowed one or more of the attributes of the Falls. These cafés, however, like the larger restaurants near the river, had suspended their functions on behalf of votaries of the picturesque. You could not in mid-January sit in their vine-sheltered gardens or terraces and drink Rhine wine in honour of the noble stream. Their thick doors were shut fast, and the air was keen enough to justify their double windows.

Schaffhausen itself is a very engaging old town, distinctly mediæval in many of its parts, in spite of the modern mills with electric light which have grown in its suburbs along the river's course. It has a huge old remnant of a castle, and gated entrances, and houses with bowed windows of irregular outline, and bright frescoes on the outer walls of many of its residences. Were I a manufacturer of theatrical scenery, I would make Schaffhausen a close study. As it is, however, one is prone to treat it as nothing but a stage on the way to the Falls.

I was glad to seek rest in the train after my slippery tramp of three or four hours. The extraordinary comprehensiveness of my ticket may be realised when I say that it set me down anon at Zurich. Zurich is the Birmingham and Manchester of Switzerland, though more beautiful by far in its situation than those two towns put together. At another time I should have rejoiced to make its acquaintance. This evening, however, I wished myself further on my way. I have never been in such crowded waiting and refreshment-rooms as those of the Zurich station. At length, however, we were summoned to the so-called express, and after another trying period of semi-suffocation by hot steam, Bâle was regained.

MASQUERADES AND TEA-GARDENS A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

THE Royal House of Stewart, with all its manifold failings, its weaknesses and vices, its indolence, selfishness and inherent

obstinacy, had one good quality; it was ever a lover of art, a patron of artists. Vandyck found his home at the Court of Charles the First; Ben Jonson was the friend of James and Ann of Denmark. For them he produced those wonderful masques which were the outcome of his poetic fancy, to which he gave full rein. His pure and elegant verse, the refinement which characterised these artistic conceptions, and made them differ widely from all other pageants, completely captivated the imagination of men like Bacon, White-lock, Clarendon, Selden, while the studious benchers of Gray's and Lincoln's Inns caught the enthusiasm and inaugurated masques of historic fame. The rugged Puritanism of the Commonwealth put its iron heel upon all such frivolities. Under its rule the nation became "nakedly and narrowly Protestant." Every outlet for artistic feeling was barred, any appeal to men's senses was proscribed. No artist ventured to produce a work with either an historical or religious tendency; his art rose no higher than a good portrait or a hunting scene. Stage plays were counted godless, masques were inventions of the devil himself. Had not Henrietta Maria, the Popish Queen, taken pleasure therein? Had not money been spent upon them which should have fed the starving poor? This portion of the denunciation could not be gainsaid. The sums expended on the production of the masques was a serious count in the indictment against them.

Under the Commonwealth the English people learned to take their pleasures soberly. Tea-gardens came much into fashion; a visit to Bagnigge, Cupers or Marrowbone gardens made the general holiday outing of both upper and middle classes, and during the days after the Restoration it so continued. Charles the Second, whose dissolute Court was an open scandal, durst not, for fear of the Puritans, introduce any godless amusements, such as masques and the like, although Pepys tells us that in his closet some of the wanton beauties of the Court occasionally performed a masque for his delectation, in which my Lady Castlemaine, assisted by the Duchess of Monmouth and others, would dress up in gorgeous habiliments and dance with vizards on. Here was indeed a falling off from the courtly pageants of Jonson and Campion. One masque took place during the Gay Monarch's reign, and is indicative of the reckless profanity of the time. This was the Dance of Death—an imitation of

the Danse Macabre—arranged and led by the King's favourite, the Earl of Rochester, and performed in St. Paul's Cathedral at the time when the plague was at its height. It was said the King was present.

George the First is usually looked upon as a stupid, plethoric German, but his Hanoverian Majesty, for all he looked so dull, was passionately addicted to amusing himself. Herrenhausen, the electoral palace, was a coarse reproduction of Versailles. There was a rustic theatre where, in George the First's young days, the shameless old Platen, his father's favourite, danced and sang in the masques which were performed with a poor attempt at pageantry. Our George had grown up with these tastes, and didn't relish the virtuous austerity he found in his new kingdom. He looked about him for some one to help him to amuse himself, and he found John James Heidegger, who was waiting for a Royal patron to appoint him King of the Revels and pay the bill of the entertainment. Heidegger was the originator of "masquerades." He could in no way be said to be a successor to Ben Jonson, neither could these entertainments, which were oftentimes degrading exhibitions, compare with the refined and classical "masques." Heidegger was nevertheless a man of a certain sort of talent; he also enjoyed the reputation of being the ugliest man of his time, and he had the good sense to appear proud of this distinction. Pope alludes to him in the Dunciad:

And lo! she bred a monster of a fowl,
Something betwixt a Heidegger and owl.

Fielding likewise introduced him as "Count Ugly" into the "Pleasures of the Town," and Hogarth often made him the subject of his pencil.

The first masquerade produced by Heidegger at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, in 1717, produced a storm of disapproval. The Grand Jury of Middlesex "presented" the fashionable and wicked diversion called "the masquerade," and particularly the contriver and carrier-on of masquerades at the King's Theatre, in order that he might be punished. The Grand Jury, however, knew their duty better than to punish the King's purveyor of pleasures. The name, however, was altered to "ball" or "ridotto." Practically it was the same thing, and the revels went on until 1724, when the Bishop of London entered the field and denounced these immoral entertainments from the pulpit. Hogarth likewise, who had begun to satirise

rise the follies of the town, produced in this year the first of his masquerades and operas, a satire against Heidegger's popular entertainments. The picture represents a mob of people crowding to the masquerade. The leader of the figures, with a cap and bells, and garter round his right knee, was supposed to be the King, who, it was said, had just given one thousand pounds to Heidegger. The purse with the label, "One thousand pounds," which a satyr holds immediately before His Majesty, is an allusion to this, and strengthens the probability of the story. The kneeling figure on the show-cloth or sign-board pouring gold at the feet of Cuzzoni, an Italian singer, with the label, "Pray accept eight thousand pounds," was designed for Lord Peterborough (Swift's Mordanto).

The death of George the First and the advent of the new King made no change in the fortune of masquerades, unless it was to strengthen their position. Under George the Second they attained a social standing which gives them almost historical importance. His second Majesty of Hanover was devoted to such entertainments. When he went on a visit to his little kingdom he gave splendid entertainments. In 1740, after his Queen's death, he had a magnificent masquerade in the Green Theatre at Herrenhausen (the Garden Theatre), with screens of linden and box and a carpet of grass. The stage and gardens were illuminated with coloured lamps. Almost the whole Court appeared in white dominoes, like spirits in the Elysian fields. Another time, still in Hanover, he went to a ball at the Opera House attired as a Turk—the grand one—with a magnificent agraife of diamonds in his turban, and his dear friend Lady Yarmonth as a Sultana.

England would have been dull after these festivities only for Heidegger. The Royal purveyor was still the "deus ex machina," who might be said "to teach Kings to fiddle and make senators dance." He boasted that, by kindly superintending the pleasures of the nobility, he netted five thousand pounds a year. A rival attraction, however, was rapidly rising, before which he had finally to strike his colours. Vauxhall Gardens was now to take the field, and keep it for more than a century against all comers. It was well said of this well-known resort "that a wealthy speculator was its father, a Prince its godfather, and all the fashion and beauty of England stood round its cradle." This would, however, have to

say to its re-incarnation. The gardens were known to the sober tea-drinkers of the Commonwealth and Restoration under the name of Spring Gardens. Samuel Pepys went there by water one summer's day in company with his wife and two maids, Bet and Mercer, and enjoyed himself mightily, as indeed the little man was wont to do wherever he went. In 1712 Evelyn, that sweetest of English writers, writes in his delicate fashion:

"Spring Gardens are especially pleasant at this time of year"—it was the month of May. "When I considered the fragrancy of the walks and bowers, with the choir of birds that sang upon the trees and the tribe of people that walked under the shade, I could not but look upon the place as a kind of Mohammedan paradise."

Although it pleased a thoughtful mind like Evelyn's to sit and enjoy nature in Spring Gardens, they were by no means so popular with the common herd as either Bagnigge, Cupers, or Marrowbone Gardens. The last-named catered for the amusement of all classes; the attractions of its bowling green, dog fights, illuminations, not forgetting Miss Trusler's cakes,* drew all the world there, although it was by no means a safe road, and robberies were frequent. Perhaps this latter circumstance had something to say to the preference given to Spring Gardens after it came into the hands of the enterprising Jonathan Tyers, under whose direction it lost its old name and was given that of Fauxhall, which afterwards became Vauxhall. Tyers was either a man of a certain amount of taste, or he had good advisers. The natural beauties of the gardens were not interfered with; the leafy groves where the nightingales sang were not cut down; walks were made in different directions; a fine orchestra and organ were added, with statues, pictures, and adornments, and in June, 1738, it was opened with a "ridotto al fresco," at which Frederick, Prince of Wales, was present, and the company, numbering four hundred persons, wore masks and dominoes. It has been alleged that Hogarth, who was in all things a good friend to Tyers, suggested to him "masquerades" as the best means of filling his pockets. Considering the manner in which the painter satirised Heidegger for a simi-

* Trusler was the proprietor of Marrowbone Gardens, and when other attractions began to fail, he instituted "Breakfasts," for which Miss Trusler made cheesecakes and fruit tarts, which had a well-deserved reputation.

lar enterprise, this advice would seem hardly consistent, and would not have been in keeping with Hogarth's otherwise upright character. That he took great interest in Tyers's speculation is certain. He helped considerably in the work of embellishment. To him were attributed most of the pictures which adorned the different pavilions; but Mr. Dobson, who has gone into the matter very closely, is of opinion that Hogarth only contributed one painting—that of Henry the Eighth and Anne Boleyn, which it was whispered thinly disguised the likenesses of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and Anne Vane, his mistress. The painter likewise designed one of the tickets, and allowed Frank Hayman to reproduce his "Morning, noon, evening, and night." For this goodwill Tyers presented him with a perpetual card of admission for six persons.

In its infancy Vauxhall had to contend against powerful rivals. Sadler's Wells was a popular place of resort; Marylebone still commanded a fashionable following; and Heidegger enjoyed the exclusive patronage of the King. The favour of the Prince of Wales was, on the other hand, given to Tyers. For him a pavilion was specially erected in front of the orchestra, where he was often to be seen. His patronage, however, was not of much account, his constant quarrels with his Royal parents placed him in the background; and to be in favour with him was sure to mean disgrace with the Court. Vauxhall, therefore, did not rank as the first place of entertainment until after the death of its first proprietor,* who was succeeded by his son Thomas—the Tom Restless of Dr. Johnson's "Idler." Tom was a clever, enterprising, somewhat erratic individual. He made many improvements in the Gardens, which soon began to attract the world of fashion, the more so that no efforts were made to puff them into notice. On the contrary, we are told "that a disdainful reticence was affected by way of contrast to the touting

advertisements of such places as Sadler's Wells and Marylebone. A statement was made that the Gardens were at the service of the public, and that it was the affair of the public to keep them up." Meantime, it is only probable to suppose that the initiated, or, as the slang of the present day has it, "those in the know," were aware that they would be well entertained and sure of finding the best of good company.

"It is an excellent place of amusement," said Dr. Johnson, "which must ever be an estate to the proprietor, as it is particularly adapted to the English nation, there being a mixture of curious show, gay exhibition, music, vocal and instrumental, and last, but not least, good eating and drinking for those who wish to purchase such regale." The philosopher went there often to enjoy the air, which was most salubrious. The arrangement of the gardens had been brought to great perfection; the walks originally laid out by Jonathan Tyers were enlarged and beautified. There was the Grand Walk; and the South Walk with its triumphal archer, three in number; and the Counter Cross Walk—painted by Canaletto—the Italian Walk; the Dutch Walk; the Temple of Comus; the Chinese Pavilion; and the Grove. The quadrangle which enclosed the Grove was occupied by a range of pavilions, booths, and alcoves, fitted up for the accommodation of supper-parties. Some of these were reserved for persons of distinction; the pavilion fronting the orchestra was larger and handsomer than the others. This was the one originally built for Prince Frederick of Wales. Here were Hayman's four Shakespearian pictures: "The Storm in 'King Lear,'" "The Play Scene in 'Hamlet,'" "Ferdinand and Miranda from 'The Tempest,'" and "A Scene from 'Henry the Fifth.'" The space between this pavilion and the orchestra was where the crowd assembled—a sort of march past of the company, who gathered here to hear the concert and stare at one another. We can pass them all in review: the women in their graceful sacques, the men in their embroidered coats and lace ruffles, their hats under their arms. Here are all the familiar faces which we know as if we had lived in their day—Johnson and Reynolds, Goldsmith, Boswell, the Gummings with their train of admirers, and the company standing on the benches to look at them. Horace Walpole arm-in-arm with George Selwyn, Fanny Burney trying to look modest, Mrs. Thrale, Lord Chesterfield, and

* J. Tyers loved the place he had made so beautiful, and shortly before his death had himself carried thither to take his last look at it. He had made a handsome income, and had purchased for his own use Denbighs, near Dorking, Surrey, which now is the property of Mr. Cubitt, who entertained there the Prince Consort. Tyers's garden contained amongst other curiosities a sernion, not in stones, but in box-wood. A representation of the Valley of the Shadow of Death in two compartments—the end of the infidel and the Christian. Such quaint devices were common in the old gardens. The writer remembers seeing in the garden of one of O'Connell's followers insulting remarks upon Lord John Russell, cut in box.

the Earl of March with La Rena, the Prince Regent, and the Great Commoner. What a shifting panorama! Not one is missing, Rowlandson's illustration gives us a glimpse at some of these worthies; it is an acquaintance from Rowlandson's picture, and is a graphic portraiture of the scene.

A summer's night, and all the world of fashion is here. Madame Weichsel stands in the front of the music gallery, with a vast number of fiddles and violoncellos behind her. She is discoursing the sweet strains of either Handel or Dr. Arne; but her eyes are fixed upon two figures in the front row of listeners—if we consider the picture carefully, we find that nearly all the eyes turn in the same direction—a young pair, most attractive by reason of their extreme youth, good looks, and high position of one—they are Florizel and Perdita. The Prince is costumed in a strawberry-tinted coat with blue facings, a lace ruffler, a black cocked hat on his head. He is evidently pressing his suit hard, to which pretty Perdita is listening, her head a little to one side. A dainty figure she is in white satin train, evening bodice, and lightly powdered curls. Her expression is a mixture of archness, innocence, and coyness. The whole assemblage watches the scene.

Major Topham, one of the fops of the day, openly sticks his glass in his eye and stares impudently. A gentleman with a wooden leg has the chivalry of a hero, and only looks furtively at the fair one—as does the dwarf close by her. Two ladies affect indifference to the flirtation, and seem engrossed with one another; but we notice that the one in blue is glinting from under her eyes in the Royal direction. These two are said to be the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Duncannon. With no positive grounds beyond conjecture, the supper-party, in one of the boxes to the left, is also supposed to consist of Johnson, Boswell, Goldsmith, and Mrs. Thrale; the last-named, however, unless it be meant for a caricature, is singularly unlike the lady. The supper-party on the left-hand side is evidently made up of rich citizens out to enjoy themselves. The food is their attraction; and they do not heed the music or stare at the Prince and his mistress. Jackson, the waiter, is opening for them a second bottle of champagne, although, to judge by their looks, they already have had enough.

Another picture of Rowlandson's shows us the beau-monde dancing *al fresco*. The

occasion is evidently some festivity, for the orchestra and gardens are illuminated.

On cold or rainy evenings the concerts were given in the music-room, where there was an elegant gallery for the musicians. The ceiling was fan-shaped, like those of the Adam brothers (it may have been after their design, the music-room not being in the original plan); it was highly decorated, as were also the columns, and has a resemblance to Zucchi's adornment of Lord Derby's house in Grosvenor Square. The panels of the walls were gradually filled with paintings, principally by Hayman. Mr. Taylor gives a long list of his pictures, including that of the female dwarf, Madame Oatherina, who was one of the attractions of the place. The concerts given in Vauxhall were of exceptional excellence. They usually began at six, and some of the best musicians of the day took part. Dr. Arne often conducted, and his sweet songs were always popular. Mrs. Mountain, Mrs. Weichsel, and her daughter, the beautiful and gifted Mrs. Billington, Signor and Signora Storace, Incedon, Braham, Mrs. Bland, and Miss Stephens all sang here. There was likewise a stage, where ballets were produced; while in the garden rope-dancing, pyrotechnic displays, balloon ascents alternated with varying success. We must not omit one of the great attractions, notably to the young, the Dark or Druids' Walk, which was arranged purposely for the plighting of lovers' vows. On both sides there were rows of lofty trees, which met at the top and formed a delightful canopy and shade even in the hottest weather; the finest singing birds built their nests here, and the sweet chorus was delightful. Some of the bushes were supposed to be enchanted, and discoursed—by means of a musical box concealed in the shrubbery—fairly music.

Walking through the Dark Walk, however, was not encouraged by judicious chaperons. Young ladies who respected themselves and were well brought up, would not enter it unless by daylight or in company with papa or mamma. In most of the novels and romances of the day the Dark Walk figures—the heroine generally managing to find her way there and to get involved in a distressful situation with the villain of the story, from which she is ultimately rescued by her honourable lover; generally a most desirable husband. Evelina got herself there and went through the programme, was insulted by a party of rakes, championed by Sir Clement

Willoughby only to be exposed to his advances, and was finally saved from a very compromising situation by her noble lover, Lord Orville—this was a pretty full evening for a young lady fresh from the country.

Fielding places his Amelia in a delicate distress while drinking her tea in one of the pavilions; poor soul, she couldn't even enjoy her little outing in peace; was there ever a sweet and virtuous creature so tortured as was this good wife and mother? Of course her good-for-nothing husband had left her, and although she had the young clergyman and the old gentleman with her, they could not protect her from the admiration of two of the sparks of the town who respected no woman who had no fitting male protector. The prettiest part of the incident comes from Amelia's efforts to conceal her annoyance from Booth, whose hot blood would soon have involved him in a quarrel.

It would be endless to instance the many writers who have introduced Vauxhall Gardens into their stories; from Goldsmith, who has given us the immortal Mr. and Mrs. Bramble and the sprightly Lydia Melford, to Thackeray, who sent Pendennis there with Fanny Bolton; but this last was in our own day when its glories had departed. Some one said it had become a low affair when you could take a milliner's apprentice there for half-a-guinea—the prices of admission had changed from the first commencement, when the entrance was one shilling, later four shillings, and in the days of the Regency the subscriptions stood at from six to ten guineas the season.

HERMITS, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

At first sight you might be inclined to question the existence of the modern hermit. The Census returns, with all their queer farrago of occupations and callings, make no mention of his peculiar way of life. Nor does the hermit, as such, appear in any of the directories, Metropolitan or provincial. But he exists all the same, and in considerable numbers; and not only he but she, for the hermit may be of either sex. The hermit is one who goes out into the wilderness to live alone, so the ancient fathers tell us, and nowhere is it easier to carry out the eremitical plan than in the wilderness of a great city such as London. The difficulty, indeed, with

any one of narrow means and possessed of no great wealth of friends, is to avoid falling into the ways of the recluse. The necessity of earning daily bread keeps most people in the kind of stir that averts positive stagnation, but when this is removed by some slender kind of provision, the tendency to a life of seclusion is even encouraged by the roar of traffic and the passing of busy crowds.

And we shall not be surprised to find hermits in Drury Lane; there was one not many years ago, a fresh-looking rustic, after the fashion of the farmer of Tilbury Vale,

In the throng of the town like a stranger is he, who lived in a garret for years, and died there in absolute solitude and seclusion. Early in the morning a few years ago, you might have met a pleasant-looking dame, in black, with the bonnet and shawl and general costume of A.D. 1830, and a little troop of dogs, kept strictly in order, who would disappear in one of the narrow courts behind St. Martin's Lane, where she lived as much apart from all the world about her as the most rigid votress of old times.

But what would you have said to the sight such as might have been witnessed not so long since, of an elderly lady encamped in the back garden of a large house in a pretentious neighbourhood, surrounded like Robinson Crusoe with goats, and dogs, and cats, but with hardly as good a shelter from the weather? As it happened, the drill-ground of one of our volunteer regiments abutted on the encampment; and the genial young fellows made great friends with our lady anchorite, who was excellent company, by the way, and full of anecdotes. They built her a capital little hermitage of boards, they fetched and carried for her, and made quite a pet of the old lady—and even proposed to adopt her as the titular mother of the regiment. But one day the myrmidons of the law descended upon the little settlement, and the poor old lady was driven out to seek shelter where she could.

Another London hermit was an Irish gentleman of good family and of some means, who lived in a narrow cul-de-sac out of Holborn, in the midst of a swarm of poor Irish, his countrymen. Poor as they might be, they none of them lived so frugally as the "jontleman" who was known to be one of the "rale ould sort," and was respected accordingly, and who, indeed, made himself useful among the

community, writing letters, and occasionally settling trifling disputes, while he was exonerated from any share in the free fights that decided more knotty causes of controversy. At his death it was found that he had led this penurious life in order to speculate more freely on the Stock Exchange, which he had done for twenty or thirty years with such mixed success, that though he left no debts, neither was there sufficient to pay his funeral expenses.

Some twenty years ago there lived in a little Welsh town on the sea-coast, in the upper room of a humble cottage, a scholar and divine, once [a fellow and tutor of his college, who on some evil report affecting his good name, had abandoned all his appointments and disappeared from the knowledge of all his old associates. He led a blameless life, associating only with the very poor, and living on the frugal fare appropriate to the hermit's cell :

A scrip with herbs and fruit supplied,
And water from the spring.

But the Welsh have a natural tendency to a life of seclusion and meditation, and stories are told of some of their bards who spent the greater part of their lives hardly stirring from the box bedstead built in the thickness of the wall, which would well represent the couch hewn out of the rock of the earlier anchorite.

Yet another Welsh anchorite of recent times had the curious notion of sleeping all day and roaming about during the night, and this in a country village where there was nothing going on after nine p.m.

The champion hermit of the century, however, was Lucas of Radcotes Green, near Hitchin, a sketch of whom formed the framework of an early Christmas Number of "All the Year Round," entitled "On Tom Tiddler's Ground." Lucas's forbears were wealthy West Indian merchants settled at Liverpool, who had acquired a small landed estate in Hertfordshire. Here the hermit lived the life of any other country gentleman of moderate means till the death of his mother, to whom he was warmly attached, in 1849, when he was nearly forty years old, an event which seems to have wrecked him altogether. The pleasant, modest country house and its lawns and gardens were given up to neglect and decay, while its owner bestowed himself in a wretched outhouse, with a blanket for all his apparel by day or night—and a very dirty blanket at that, fastened at the neck by a wooden skewer—and for a couch only a heap of

ashes. Yet he does not seem to have courted notoriety, but rather to have had it thrust upon him. But he had neighbours in the literary world, and soon obtained a notoriety to which he did not seem averse. Anyhow, he was not unfrequently interviewed in succeeding years; but he was an awkward subject—"crede experto"—as he seemed to have an insatiable curiosity as to the circumstances of his visitors, and assailed them with a cross-fire of questions, while he was impenetrably reticent as to his own way of life. When all was done he would give you a glass of sherry, which tasted of soot, and hob-a-nob cheerfully with you, and discuss the affairs of the day, but his own affairs, never; which was disappointing. He was visited by great numbers of tramps, to whom he seems to have been kind on the whole, giving always a glass of gin, and occasionally a shilling to the respectful vagrant.

Altogether the poor man does not seem to have harmed anybody, and it is possible that in leading this wretched life, he had some notion of an expiation for his own sins or those of another, which, if mistaken, was not altogether unworthy. Anyhow, Lucas lived this way for five-and-twenty years, and was at last, in 1874, found insensible and half-frozen on the top of his ash-heap, and taken away to die elsewhere.

When Lucas was a boy an old lady was still living who carried the eremitic record to well into the previous century. Old Mrs. Lewson, of Coldbath Square, who died 1816, is said to have been born A.D. 1700—but this is probably a mistake—in Essex Street, Strand; whence she removed on her marriage early in life to a wealthy but elderly husband, to the then rural neighbourhood of Coldbath Fields. Left by her husband's death a young and wealthy widow, it was perhaps some unlucky affair of the heart that first inclined her to seclusion. Anyhow, she lived a voluntary prisoner in her own house all the rest of her life, retaining still the garb of her early years, when George the First was King,

With ruffs and cuffs and fardingales,

even to the days of the scanty skirts and clinging robes of the Regency.

Contemporary with Lady Lewson, as she was always called in the neighbourhood, was Lord Byron, the uncle of the poet, who, after killing his neighbour Chaworth in a brawl at a London tavern, retired altogether into seclusion at New-

stead, varying the monotony of existence by training the crickets of his lonely hearth—so the story runs—and with such success that they would dance around him in a ring. When the old lord died, tradition adds, the crickets left the house "en masse." Naturally Lord Byron's humbler neighbours set him down as a magician and the crickets as evil spirits, who had gone to attend him in another place.

For the notion that the secrets of nature could be best worked out in age and seclusion, with spells and meditations deep and subtle incantations, long commended itself to popular belief. And Milton seems indefinitely to share it when he invokes for his old age

The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth show,
And every herb that sips the dew.

Milton's aspirations for the peaceful hermitage have been shared by many others. Even the genial and social Sir Walter Scott had imagined for himself a lonely cell by St. Mary's Lake near the "bonny holms of Yarrow." And Wordsworth himself would have been no bad tenant for the hermitage on St. Herbert's Isle, in Derwentwater, that St. Cuthbert had once visited, who himself loved so dearly a solitary life.

In the "Black Dwarf," too, Scott has pictured that morbid sense of physical imperfections which leads so many to a life of practical seclusion. On the other hand, in the jolly hermit of "Ivanhoe" he brings the hermitage pleasantly into connection with vert and venison, and the jolly companions of the merry greenwood.

The genuine mediæval hermitage was more often found in the city than in the forest. Victor Hugo gives us a description of one in the heart of Paris, the cell of Madame Roland, of Roland's Tower, who, for grief at the death of her father in the crusade, shut herself up for the rest of her life. "And here for twenty years the desolate damsel awaited death as in a living tomb, sleeping on a bed of ashes without even a stone for a pillow, clothed in a dirty sack, and subsisting on the charity of passers-by." Could it have been that our Lucas had read the famous romance of Victor Hugo, and had modelled himself after Madame Roland?

Hugo pictures another Parisian anchorite, "who during thirty years chanted the seven Psalms of penitence from a heap of straw at the bottom of a cistern, and

even more loudly than ever at night; and to this day you may think to hear his voice as you enter the Rue du Puits-qui-parle." This kind of hermitage, by the way, can be paralleled in England, for at Royston there is a hermitage cut out of the chalk thirty or forty feet below the surface, accessible only by a narrow shaft, so that the voice of the penitent would literally cry from the depths.

There were hermitages, too, attached to most of the principal churches. St. Paul's had one, if not more, and doubtless the Abbey too. A cell attached to the Church of St. John's at Chester was reputed to have sheltered the unfortunate Harold, who, according to this tradition, recovered from his wounds, and lived as a humble anchorite for many years of the Conqueror's reign.

A still earlier legend is of Guy of Warwick, who, returning as a palmer from the Holy Land, assumed the hermit's frock, and lived for years all unknown in a lonely cell adjoining the gate of his own castle. Here he lived on alms daily supplied to him as one of a company of thirteen poor men—a mediæval thirteen club—at the hands of his faithful wife, who regularly entreated their prayers for the safe return of her dear lord. The dour old Guy remained unmoved, and it was only in his last moments that he revealed himself by sending to his wife the ring she had exchanged with him at her bridal.

Then there is the ballad of the Hermit of Warkworth, in which the hermit is represented as sheltering young Percy, Hotspur's son, who, disguised as a shepherd, has won the heart of a noble damsel to whom the hermit presently unites him. And this is the true rôle of the hermit in romance, as witness Friar Laurence in "Romeo and Juliet," whereas Goldsmith in doubling the parts of hermit and lover, as in Edwin and Angelina, suggests a hermitage "à deux" which, however pleasing, seems to contravene the rules of the game.

As for the hermit in his religious aspect, we shall find him of most respectable antiquity. In the early centuries of our era the Thebaid of Egypt was almost crowded with them, and women as well as men embraced a life of seclusion, which was not, however, without its social features. So that to be quite alone one had to climb to the top of an obelisk or pillar like the famous Stylites. Saint Anthony, too, was one of the hermits of the Thebaid who

found the company to be met with rather oppressive. But the tradition of this mode of life seems to have been handed down to the Celtic Church, and its religious settlements seem to have been rather clusters of anchorites than monasteries of the more regular pattern.

But, indeed, the hermit belongs to all the religions of the world. He is in full swarm among the disciples of Buddha. The Brahmans consider the ascetic life as the final and necessary stage of existence; the Mohammedans have their solitary dervishes. And where there is no particular religious sanction for the life, people take to it of their own accord. All of which only shows that in the general current of social and gregarious life, there are numerous eddies and backwaters, which draw insensibly towards solitude and seclusion.

A LITTLE COQUETTE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

HILDA and Lord Langridge had been engaged three months. During that time she had alternately fascinated and perplexed him. She was never in the same mood two days together; she changed like the wind. Sometimes she was gracious and almost tender, and his heart beat high with hope; sometimes she was cold and scornful, and made him absolutely and completely wretched. But in whatever mood she was, she never failed to charm him. Her caprices only served to augment a love which partook of the nature of blind infatuation.

"I don't know any other man alive who would put up with me," she said one day in a fit of remorse after she had been treating him particularly badly. "You must tell me if you want to be off your bargain, Langridge."

But Langridge was so shocked at the idea that the queen could do wrong, that she was really touched, and called him a dear, and sent him away happy.

They had been engaged in November, and it was now the end of January. Lord Langridge talked of giving a ball at Fairholme Abbey, where Hilda was to queen it as the future mistress of the fine old place. Hilda was enchanted at the idea. She had become feverishly restless of late, and seemed to need continual excitement to keep her from flagging.

"It will be perfect," she said delightedly. "I shall enjoy it ever so much. Things were really getting too dull to be endured."

"I am so glad you are pleased, my pet," said Langridge, his round face beaming with pride at the idea that he had hit upon something to please her. "You shall have the ordering of the whole thing, invite all the guests, and do exactly as you like with everybody. It shall be your ball, and you shall be queen of the evening."

Accordingly one wet, raw, misty February day, he rode over to the red-gabled house to consult Hilda about some final arrangements. The ball was to take place on the morrow, and Hilda had already been two or three times to Fairholme Abbey with her mother to see that things were to her liking. She had had many caprices, some of them very expensive ones, but Langridge was her slave and obeyed her in all things. He had even knocked down the wall between the morning-room and the dining-room in order to make a particularly magnificent supper-room, which was to be decorated with garlands of *Maréchal Niel* roses. Nothing was too extravagant for Hilda just then.

As he entered the garden-gate and walked up the path, leading his mare by the bridle, he met Hilda herself, issuing forth from the hall door. She was attired in a close-fitting ulster and a small hat with a veil. Her boots were strong and thick.

"My dear Hilda!" said Langridge in great astonishment and distress, "you surely are not going out this morning?"

"As you see," returned Hilda determinedly, lifting a strong sole for his inspection. "I am going for a tremendous walk. I have been bottled up all day, and now I have burst."

"But," objected Langridge, with a piteous look at the soaking earth and streaming sky, "it is not fit weather for a dog to be out in."

"Oh, but I am a very strong dog, you know," returned Hilda, starting off down the path with an air of determination, "and I never take cold. It is better than stopping indoors in the house and going mad—which I should inevitably do. You wouldn't like me to go mad, would you, Langridge?"

"Don't talk so childishly!" said Langridge, losing his temper a little. "You must at least wait until this rain stops."

"It will not stop all day. Good-bye."

"I am coming with you," said Langridge firmly.

"You are going to do nothing of the kind. I wish to go for a walk alone."

"But I came to ask you about the ball——"

"I am sick to death of the ball," returned his betrothed pettishly. "Go and ask mamma anything you want to know."

Langridge followed her, still leading the mare. The red-gabled house possessed no stables.

"I don't want to consult your mother. I want to consult you."

"Then for goodness' sake consult me now and have done with it," cried Hilda, standing still in the rain, with a little stamp of the foot. "What is it? If only you knew how absurd you look, dragging that great animal after you all down the path!"

"I dare say I often look absurd in your eyes," said Langridge, a little ruffled; "but I came over on purpose to——"

"I know! I know!" cried Hilda, in a fever of impatience. "What is it? I am in an awful temper this morning, Langridge."

"So it seems," said Langridge.

"That speech was dry enough to make up for all this rain," said Hilda, recovering herself a little and laughing. "Tell me what you want and let me go."

"You have forgotten to ask Mrs. Dalrymple to the ball," said Langridge, in a tone of determination, "and I want to know why?"

"Mrs. Dalrymple! The widow with the Piccadilly weepers, do you mean? I never meant to."

"Piccadilly weepers!" ejaculated Langridge, in a tone of horror. "Whatever do you mean?"

"Aren't they Piccadilly weepers, those muslin things and streamers? I am sure I thought they were. I don't like her, anyhow, and I don't want her. She is so frightfully pious that she seems out of place at a ball. Her conversation always makes me feel as if I had been in several churches."

Langridge turned towards the house with a hopeless gesture, and Hilda started off as fast as her feet could carry her. Langridge tied his horse to a tree and entered the house. Mrs. Clifford greeted him with smiles.

"I am so sorry," she began, "dear Hilda has just gone out. She insisted on walking over to the village in spite of the weather.

I told her how very angry indeed you would be if you knew it."

"I told her that myself," returned Langridge, walking over to the window and staring out at the dripping trees and the dismal little pools under them, "but my wishes did not seem to have any effect upon her."

"Dear Hilda seemed a little restless this morning, I thought," said Mrs. Clifford apologetically.

After a pause the figure at the window said, without turning round:

"A woman who is happy and contented is very seldom restless, Mrs. Clifford. I have sometimes thought lately that Hilda is neither the one nor the other. If—if I am not the man to make her happy, it—it is not yet too late to draw back."

Mrs. Clifford looked up in great alarm, and determined to give her foolish daughter a piece of her mind on her return home. A throb of terror shook her at the mere thought of Hilda losing such a chance after all.

"Hilda is perfectly happy," she said hurriedly. "I am sure she has everything a woman can want. You indulge her every whim. The fact is, you spoil her," she added, with tentative playfulness.

"Hilda is of too decided a character to have her head turned by attentions from me," returned Langridge a little bitterly. "I have done my best to make her happy, and I honestly believe that I have failed. I can only do my best," he added with a sigh. "And she has only to ask for her freedom back and——"

"My dear Lord Langridge," said Mrs. Clifford, in the greatest alarm, afraid that Hilda had done or said something past forgiveness, even by her humblest slave, "I assure you that Hilda would be heart-broken if she thought she had offended you. Whatever has she done?"

"Nothing, nothing," said Langridge hastily. "Perhaps it was only fancy. She—she was restless and unhappy, I thought. I could not bear it if I thought I made her unhappy," he added in a low voice.

"But she is not unhappy! I assure you she is not. Why, she is devoted to you."

Langridge smiled a little grimly, and turned the subject by speaking of the ball.

"The dining-hall looks rather fine now that wall is down," he said, going over to the fireplace and standing with his back to it. "There is no denying that Hilda

has perfect taste. That idea of only having certain flowers in certain rooms is very pretty."

"The Abbey will look like a huge conservatory," said Mrs. Clifford, falling readily into his mood, "and I am afraid these whims of dear Hilda's are very expensive."

"If she is pleased, that is all I care for," said Langridge abruptly. "What flowers does she want to wear herself? I must send her a bouquet."

"She will wear a black gown," said Mrs. Clifford, her tones betraying that she had fought over the subject with Hilda. "So absurd of her! To dress like a dowager when she is only twenty-one—and almost a bride, too."

The word "bride" roused Langridge for a moment.

"I wish she would wear white," he said wistfully. "She looks so lovely in white."

"I will tell her what your wishes are," said Mrs. Clifford eagerly. "It is not too late to change, and——"

"Please say nothing about me. My wishes are only likely to influence her the other way," said Langridge with a slight return of his former bitterness.

"Oh, but I shall make a point of it! Hilda must not be allowed to become unreasonable. As for flowers——" she hesitated.

"I suppose she is not going to wear any?" said Langridge, with rather a hard note in his voice.

"She says not. Really, I don't know why Hilda has taken such foolish fads into her head. One would think she was bent on making herself look as plain as possible," said Mrs. Clifford in a vexed voice.

"Hilda could never look plain. And she shall have her own way in everything," said Langridge, with a sudden resolute return to good humour, "even about not asking Mrs. Dalrymple."

"Dear Hilda does dislike her so," murmured Mrs. Clifford apologetically; "but, of course, your wishes——"

Langridge laughed.

"My wishes again! I have no wishes but Hilda's. Still, Mrs. Dalrymple is an old friend, and I am sorry she has not been asked."

He walked over to the window again, and once more surveyed the gloomy day. Then he announced abruptly that he must be going, and rode off in a puzzled frame of mind.

In the meantime Hilda had been ploughing her way steadily along the country road that led to the village. A keen wind had sprung up and blew gloomily through the black hedges. It was impossible to hold an umbrella up, and she walked along with bent head. The battling with the wind seemed to take some of the fierce restlessness out of her. She recognised a force in nature more restless than her own spirit. The exertion seemed to calm her.

"There is nothing like a good tear in a blustering wind for knocking the ill-temper out of one," she thought, as she turned to go home after she had finished making her purchases. "I feel almost amiable now, and certainly not half so restless. I wonder if poor Langridge is still cooling his heels at home waiting for me?"

A heavy grey mist was shrouding the landscape with a sort of ragged curtain as she walked along. A fringe of grey cloud hung so low that it obscured the tops of the trees. As her mental excitement wore off physical reaction set in, and Hilda began to feel wet, chilly, and miserable.

"I hope I have not caught cold," she thought as the wet mist clung about her; "it would be very hard on Langridge if his future bride appeared at the ball with a red nose and tearful eyes. Colds in the head are so unbecoming."

Then her thoughts ran on the dress she was going to wear. She had insisted on black—but it was a glittering black which would sparkle with every movement, and show off to perfection the dazzling whiteness of her neck and arms. The more simple her attire the better taste it would be, she decided. She did not wish to jump into white satin and orange-blossom before it was necessary. As for flowers——

"They only get withered and faded," she said to her mother. "If Langridge asks you, be sure you say I do not mean to wear any. He is certain to send me some forget-me-nots or sentimental rubbish of that kind."

The wind was abating a little, and she ventured to put up her umbrella again. On ahead she could see the figure of a man coming towards her through the mist. For one impatient moment she thought that it was Langridge who had come to meet her. A second look told her that the figure was too tall and shapely to belong to the owner of Fairholme Abbey.

The stranger also had his head bent, and his collar well up to his ears. As

they passed each other Hilda peered curiously at him to see what he was like; at the same moment a gust of wind suddenly turned her umbrella inside out. She gave a little cry of distress; the umbrella was flapping and straining like some huge bird that was bent on carrying her off as his prey in the darkness.

The man with the overcoat pulled up to his ears stopped politely, and asked if he could render her any assistance.

"Please throw the thing over the hedge for me," said Miss Clifford with a gasp of fatigue. "I have got my fingers all mixed up in the handle, and I feel sure I shall be up in the clouds like a new sort of comet unless you help me."

The umbrella handle was one made to sling on the wrist, and for a moment she could not free herself from it. The stranger subdued the struggling thing, and took it from her.

"Am I really to throw it over the hedge?" he asked, looking at her.

She had been too occupied before to notice his face. But now she scrutinised him with sudden alarm.

"Yes, please," she began. "I——"

The umbrella was over the hedge in a moment, and the stranger had lifted his hat and passed on with a smile. She stood irresolute for a second or so, looking after him. Then something stronger than herself seemed to urge her to action. The stranger had not gone many paces. She sent a feeble cry after him.

"Captain Curwen!"

He turned and came up to her, a smile still hovering over his lips.

"So you have decided to recognise me at last," he remarked, without offering her his hand.

"At first I didn't know—I wasn't quite sure——" she faltered.

"I knew you in a moment; and I found you in a scrape as usual. You used to have a faculty for getting into scrapes, Hilda."

He called her Hilda, and spoke to her in the old superior, domineering way—just as he used to do, she thought. He had not changed in the least.

"Are you stopping here long?" she asked him.

"In this particular spot? No, for I shall be soaked through, and you too. Only you are soaked already. You had better run home and get your wet things off."

He turned and walked beside her, and she obeyed him meekly. She had called him domineering, and said that he treated her as a child. He did so still; but she bowed to the master hand.

"I have come home for good," he announced abruptly, as she did not speak.

"Oh, indeed! Here?" said Hilda rather faintly.

"Of course. My mother would never forgive me if I settled elsewhere."

"I suppose not."

They had wonderfully little to say to each other, these two who had not met for so long. Hilda seemed tongue-tied, and he made no effort to break the silence.

At the cross-road he stopped and held out his hand.

"I must say good-bye. You are looking very pale and tired, Hilda, but otherwise you are very little changed. Not quite so sprightly as usual, perhaps; but that is easily accounted for by the depressing weather and the loss of your best umbrella."

She shook hands in silence, and they separated. As she walked in at the gate of the red-gabled house, she told herself that she hated him more than ever.

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MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVIII. ON CONDITION.

PHILIP saw no grey in the Glen, but only a beautiful soft light of evening time. His Princess was there, and she had sent word that he was to follow: His heart was full of her. His ideal was so high, so beautiful, that it lifted him out of himself into a region that he had never explored before. As he walked on, not too quickly, for the whole place was full of her, he vividly remembered his first arrival in cold and wet. He recalled this very glen which had then seemed to him like a region of everlasting night, and honest Oldcorn only like some evil gnome luring him to destruction. He had indeed lured him, but it was to a palace, and to the Princess, and the whole world had become fairyland to him.

In Philip's mind the past seemed non-existent. Forster's words he remembered not at all. The money transactions which he and the Duke had discussed, were to him a mere detail. The only thing that mattered at all was the fact that his Princess was won. There was nothing worldly about her, nothing sordid in her character. His own sister Clytie had taught him what a woman could become who was proud of her riches, proud of her beauty, and proud of being able to attract notice. Philip knew that all this was unworthy of the attention of a noble mind. His Princess had never demeaned herself to anything mean or small.

When he came in sight of her, for Jim

Oldcorn had delivered the message, Philip felt as if he were hardly worthy to approach this woman. He was conscious also of feeling dumb, and as if poor common words were all too worthless to offer her. Of himself he did not think at all, his mind was full of her beauty, which all London had applauded; and of her incomparable nobility, which he alone could fully understand. Suddenly he saw her standing against the evening sky, which by contrast with the gloom of the Glen looked strangely light. He saw that she was leaning against the gate, and he wondered whether she were thinking—of what? Her thoughts were too sacred for him to intrude upon, even to himself. A knight of chivalry had never worshipped more humbly than did Philip at this moment, when he saw Penelope turn and come slowly towards him.

He took her outstretched hand with a new awe, trembling at the touch of her fingers. This first passion was as sacred to Philip as his religion. He had never loved another woman, and this precious gift was beyond his understanding. He did not miss her greeting, for his own words were very few because of his deep emotion.

"My darling—I have come," he said. "In the future, will you trust me with yourself? Will you let me do everything for you—and think for you? This has been a sad trying time for you, I know, but it will be a happiness to us both to avoid all public fuss and show."

"Yes," she said, as she felt some reverent kisses on her hand.

"My Princess! Do you know, sweetest, that I cannot believe this is truth and reality? I feel that I am in a beautiful dream, and that I shall not be allowed to realise all that my inmost being would fain

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show you of love. Shall we sit here a moment on this fallen tree—that is if you are not cold?”

Penelope obeyed, but she did not come nearer to him than she could help, and he felt that she was not able to understand all the words he wanted to pour into her ears. He was silent from intense fear of saying something which she might not understand. The great dog came close up to them, and snarled in low tones at the stranger; then he laid himself close to his mistress, as if to guard her from harm.

“He does not understand that I am a new protector, dearest.”

“No; he and I have been too long accustomed to loneliness—to accept any other life easily,” said Penelope slowly.

“Yes, I know, my Princess; you are brave and loyal to the core. You have had a long, weary time of loneliness, but now it will be always as you like. You must never let me hinder your wishes. Do you understand? You are to do as you like. I have dedicated my life entirely to you, not for any selfish view of my own, but for your happiness alone. Can you realise that?”

“Forster would have been my master,” were the words which floated dimly through Penzie’s mind. She shrank from Philip’s entire unselfishness; it only added to her annoyance.

“Thank you, Philip.” She spoke the name with a slight hesitation. “You are very kind, I know; but you will understand that, brought up as I have been, my liberty is very dear to me; that I—I can give you so little.”

“I asked for so little; only the right to love you, my Princess.”

“Yes, you asked for that, and—and I granted it; but you may repent. Let me say it now at once. Philip, it is not too late to draw back if you repent of the bargain.”

“The bargain! Penelope, dearest, there is none between us.”

“Yes, there is; you do not understand. I told you that I—I would marry you—I would marry you to be your wife in name—but—love I cannot give so easily. You know that love cannot be called up at will.” Penelope spoke in a low voice, but there was no tremor in the tone, each word was clear and distinct.

“You said, dearest, that I was not to expect protestations of affection. You know I have never asked you for any. I told you that I could love enough for two

of us. You must let me do that. I do not ask for anything but—Penzie, my dearest—tell me that you trust me entirely, that you will allow me——”

“I gave you the conditions of our marriage,” she said, with the slightest shade of irritation in her voice. “If you cannot accept them, would it not be better to——”

“Don’t use that word,” said Philip, in a low voice, as if the very sound hurt him. “You have chosen me from the many who, I know, would have been only too happy to be your——”

At this moment the Duke’s step was heard coming quickly towards them, and Penelope started up as if she were afraid of being found talking to Philip.

“Come,” she said, “my uncle is close by. But remember you are accepting me with the full knowledge of how little I can give you. We need not mention it again, need we?”

“There you are, Penelope! The Glen is extremely damp this evening; you are courting rheumatism. Gillbanks, if you can spare a few minutes, I want you. You two will have plenty of time in the future to talk.”

“Then I will take Nero out on the mountain and come home by the lane,” said Penelope, turning towards her uncle. He could not distinctly see her face, but he recognised the proud reserve of her tone. The Duke was a little uneasy as he drew Philip away.

“So everything is ready for to-morrow, Philip? The parson and the man of law,” he said, laughing a little.

“Yes, everything,” said Philip dreamily.

“And you still think you had better take her for a honeymoon to Switzerland?”

“I had not time to ask her. Everything has been so hurried. I must do just as she likes.”

“Of course. Penelope is used to having her own way in many matters. She is not named a Princess for nothing.”

Philip was silent. He did not like to hear his future wife discussed even by her uncle.

“We have kept it very quiet,” continued the Duke, “even from our household. Under our peculiar circumstances it was better. You must not mind if the retainers growl a little. They are still sore over the death of the heir of the Winskells. Our ways are very conservative in this out-of-the-way glen; but Penelope has seen the great world now.”

"Yes, and the world has seen her," said Philip, smiling.

"Her father is sadly broken down since that day. He cannot get over his son's death. Penelope was never the same to him, never. You must not mind, Gillbanks, if he does not welcome you as he should—as I do."

"I can understand," said Philip; "you know I am willing to devote my life to her. To-morrow all the papers will be signed. After that this house and all this property will legally belong to my wife. Everything is to be done in her name. Can you make her father understand it?"

"Perhaps; I don't know. Anyhow, my poor brother will bear it but ill. We must make allowances. Let me manage it all. I would advise you to take Penelope away to Switzerland, anywhere where she will go; so that her father may gradually understand everything and become accustomed to a new régime."

"Penelope must decide."

"Very well, I will talk about it to her. She is still walking in a dream, for this sad shock has come upon us all very suddenly."

"But surely there was not much sympathy between the brother and sister?" said Philip, remembering former days in the old Palace.

"Personally hardly any at all; but you, Gillbanks, can perhaps hardly understand the old feudal feeling of the family."

"No, I have none, you know," and Philip's smile was like bright sunshine after a storm.

"It is very difficult to explain," continued the Duke; "it seems reincarnated with each new generation. For instance, Penelope has it very strongly developed. She would go through fire and water merely for the honour of the Winskells, even if the loss of that honour hardly touched her personally. Her own wishes are as nothing compared to this other inheritance of family honour."

"That is what marks her out from thousands of other women," said Philip. "Have I not always seen it and recognised it in her?"

"Ah! Well, perhaps. Here we are, Gillbanks. Now I shall take you to your own room, and later on I will come to you with the papers, and we can finish talking over the plans. You are resolved to sink the money on the repairs of the Palace?"

"Yes, I am quite decided. The Princess

must have a home fit for herself," said Philip, smiling; "besides, it is really better done at once. I can trust you to see after it and do it in the way she would best like. I might not understand as well as you do. If Penelope prefers going abroad whilst this is being done, so much the better for me. I shall have her to myself. We might even meet the Bethunes. She liked them, and I see she is fastidious in her likings."

"But once she loves, she is as firm as a rock. That is part of the Winskell inheritance. There have been wild Winskells—the race is not exemplary—but we are always firm of purpose."

The Duke led Philip into a part of the Palace which he had not seen on the occasion of his first visit. The southern turret was old and dilapidated, and as Philip followed his conductor, his practical eye noted, as the candle-light fell on worm-eaten beams and cracked masonry, all the repairs that would be needed. The Duke opened a door on the second landing, and Philip saw that he was in a very pretty octagon room, which looked over the Glen upon the beautiful mountain chain beyond. There was a small fire burning on the open hearth, and a table was set, on which was spread a substantial supper. A door in the corner opened into a bedroom which the Duke pointed out to Philip as the one prepared for his use.

"You will be undisturbed here, Gillbanks. It was once the Prince's room. Poor fellow, he did not mind decaying beams, as you see, but the aspect is charming. Penelope prefers to remain alone this evening. Ah! Gillbanks, I was right, though. She was a splendid success in town, wasn't she? For once she saw life as it should be seen."

The Duke's eye kindled; it was as if he had said that he too had seen life as it should be seen.

"Yes, but Penelope did not really care for the world. She is superior to it."

"I don't know. I imagine that under some circumstances Penelope would take to the world kindly. I must leave you now, and I will come back to you when she goes to bed."

CHAPTER XIX. SELF-SACRIFICED.

In the Duke's study Penelope Winskell sat by her uncle's side. They had been silent a little while. One of his hands was on her shoulder, and with the other he held hers. At last the Princess spoke:

"Do you remember our conversation here before we went to London, uncle?"

"Yes, certainly; we said we should save the house of Rothery, and we have done it. But we shall regret the old times, Penzie. I shall be dull without you, my child. I have had no time to realise it till this moment."

Penelope caught her breath quickly.

"I had forgotten that! I have been thinking only of myself."

"No, not of yourself, but of Rothery."

Penelope was silent for a few moments, and then she said:

"It is really settled, isn't it? Philip Gillbanks' money will save us?"

"Yes, certainly; he is the most generous, the most thoughtful of men. He worships you, Penelope."

Penelope made a little impatient movement.

"Oh, you know, uncle, I never thought of myself in the matter at all. A man of no birth can have nothing to do with me."

The Duke coloured. He had hardly expected his niece to speak thus on the eve of the wedding.

"Gillbanks is a gentleman by feeling and by education, Penzie."

"The cloven foot is always seen sooner or later, always—and when one least expects it."

"He is to be your husband, Penzie."

The Duke felt obliged to speak, feeling capable of moralising up to this point.

"Oh, yes, of course; but—" then Penelope paused; even to her uncle she dared not, she must not speak plainly, and yet she could turn to no one else. She felt the deep loneliness of her position as she had never felt it before. Her very strength seemed weakness in this hour. Oh, if her sacrifice had meant happiness, if it had been no sacrifice at all! She had accepted it so lightly, and Heaven had taken her at her word. Penelope rebelled against fate.

"I don't know any other man who would act as this one is doing," continued the Duke. "He is more than liberal, he is princely."

"He is glad enough to become allied to the Winskells—you forget that. Besides, uncle, have we not often discussed it? These 'nouveaux riches' spend money to increase their worth in the eyes of the world."

"Well, often they do, but don't be unjust to Gillbanks. The world will say you have done well for yourself."

"Because it will know nothing about it.

So few would do what we have done for the honour of their name."

The Duke smiled. He saw his own follies exaggerated in Penelope's mind, and admired them, though secretly he could not altogether agree with her.

"Honestly, child, I did the best I could. The others made fair promises, but only he, only Gillbanks would give blindly. Then I can trust him. I can trust you to him. Had he been a bad man I should have had qualms, though you can—"

"The man was of little importance, so that he had the money. I should know in any case how to take care of myself," said Penelope in a low voice. "But, dear uncle, do not let us discuss this subject any more. It is done—finished. I want your help about the future. What about my father? He will hate Philip Gillbanks, I know he will."

"He will accept the money, and that prevents open hostility. But we must keep them apart. I advise you, Penzie, to go for a wedding tour. The repairs shall be begun at once. I must be here to watch over them, and I shall have 'carte blanche' about the money."

"You will enjoy bricks and mortar, and you are the only man who can be trusted with the old house. Don't let them spoil it—but I know you will not. As to going away—yes, I think you are right. Philip Gillbanks and I had better go away alone, and learn to live our new lives. He will do anything I tell him."

Again the Duke coloured, though the darkness hid the fact.

"You must remember what you owe to him."

Penelope started up.

"No, no, uncle, don't speak like that. I cannot become a supplicant; that is impossible. He knows exactly what he undertakes, and what I undertake. He takes me on my own conditions."

"He is a brave man, Penzie," said the Duke, smiling; "but come, it is late. At all events your marriage will not cost much. The privacy is necessary, and I must say it is very much more agreeable than a wedding at St. George's, Hanover Square, would have been."

Penelope stood up. She put her hand up to her neck, and took from the folds of her dress the topaz locket.

"Uncle Greybarrow, this is my inheritance. If I part from it, you will know that the penalty that follows will be deserved."

"Still superstitious, Penzie! The Winkells are bound to be. Child—you must be happy. Tell me you will be happy!"

"Happy! What does the word mean?" she said impatiently.

"Most women are happier married. You will have a very indulgent husband."

"I shall have saved our house from ruin, and I shall have known what life means, uncle," answered Penelope. Then she stood up and put her arms round her uncle's neck, and for a few moments laid her beautiful head on his shoulder. They were both taking leave of the old life, the life they had lived so much together in poverty and loneliness.

"I have never thanked you enough, dear uncle. All that has made life worth having you have given me, more than I can tell you. If it had not been for you, I should never have been to London, or seen——"

"You enjoyed it! That's right. But the future is bright still, dear, very bright."

"Enjoyed it! No—not that—I seemed to live, just to live. All these years I have existed, I suppose. I had ideas—yes, you remember, uncle—ideas about reforming people, and teaching them, and all that. I was foolish—but I learnt more than I can ever teach."

He did not understand her meaning, but stroked her head softly.

"I am proud of you, Princess—I shall not now see the fall of the Winkells. For years I have dreaded that ruin must come, but you and I, you and I, saved it. Good night, child. Sleep well before your marriage day. I shall tell Betty to pack your trunk in case you go to-morrow."

"Tell Philip I will go. Let us go directly the wedding breakfast is over. It will be best."

Then the Princess moved away and retired to her own room, where Betty was grumbling and packing, and invoking strange divinities to forgive this marriage or to bring vengeance upon the house of Rothery, which had so far forgotten its duty as to sanction a wedding before the heir had been duly mourned.

When the old woman had left her, Penelope locked her door, and sat down to think. To-day was hers, this evening of to-day; after that, after that—"There is only one man who should dare to claim me," she murmured, "only one. Not this man, not this Philip Gillbanks."

She sat down and looked over her

treasures—childish things which she had put into a separate box and locked up. Then a few London relics: some flowers Forster had given her at Richmond, one note he had written to her as to the hour of meeting; that was all she had belonging to him and to that episode. Philip's relics she tore up. She would have liked to pull off the diamond ring she wore, and to throw it far away out of the window, but she dared not. Finally, she undressed and went to bed with one firm determination in her mind, and no prayer on her lips. She could not pray.

Far into the night Philip and the Duke talked on. They discussed business matters, made rough sketches of repairs and improvements, and put down probable costs. They did not mention Penelope again, except that the Duke gave her message to Philip concerning the journey.

"Then let it be so," he said, smiling. "I will telegraph to-morrow to reserve a carriage, and we can sleep at Charing Cross. She must need rest. On those Swiss mountains she will get back her colour. She is rather pale and weary. You will trust me with her, will you not?"

Then the Duke smiled and assented, and Philip also went to bed, wondering at his own happiness, and wishing he could have Forster's sympathy and his presence on the morrow. Suddenly his friend's conversation came back to him, and the recollection of it made him almost glad that Forster could not come. The last act of the bridegroom was to thank Heaven for this most precious gift about to be given to him. "I have many blessings, more than I deserve," he murmured, "much more."

LONDON IN THE POETS.

ALTHOUGH London has never appealed to the imagination of its inhabitants in general, nor its men of letters in particular, in quite the same way as Paris, and though with considerable truth a modern poet has apostrophised it as:

City that waitest to be sung,
For whom no hand
To mighty strains the lyre hath strung
In all this land,
Though mightier theme the mightiest ones
Sung not of old,

yet from early days the story of its streets has been told in verse, and few of our poets have not somewhere in their works referred to the metropolis. Often they

are more appalled by its vast extent than fascinated by its attractions.

The fair aspect of the town in the seventeenth century is borne witness to by Milton in language which to-day might seem somewhat exaggerated. Knowing well the busy hum of men—Aldersgate Street and St. Bride's, Whitehall and rural Holborn—he must have loved it not a little when he exclaims:

Oh City founded by Dardanian hands,
Whose towering front the circling realms commands,
Too blest abode! no loveliness we see
In all the earth, but it abounds in thee.

Cowper, again, at a later period—lover of the peaceful pursuits and joys of country life though he was—asks:

Where has pleasure such a field,
So rich, so thronged, so drained, so well described
As London—opulent, enlarged, and still
Increasing London!

thinking, perchance, of his careless days in the neighbourhood of Southampton Row, spent in "giggling and making giggle" with his fair cousins, or later, when as a Templar he formed one of the little circle of Westminster men who composed the "Nonsense Club," and dined together every Thursday by way of promoting the feast of reason and the flow of soul.

To Shelley's sensitive soul it was not the streets of brick or stone, but the men and women who trod them, often in sorrow, that won his regard. Flitting as he did from one temporary residence to another, few parts of the West End could have been unknown to him from the day when in company with Hogg he arrived at the lodgings in Poland Street, attracted by a name which "reminded him of Thaddeus of Warsaw, and of freedom." Later, too, in his lodgings in Half-Moon Street, where the poet loved to sit in a projecting window, book in hand, what strange contrasts must he not have perceived in the busy stream of life in Piccadilly! Thus he writes of London as:

That great sea whose ebb and flow
At once is deep and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more,
Yet in its depths what treasures!

In a similar way the sadness of a great city affected the mind of William Blake, who in his "Songs of Experience" says:

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

Other poets, however, have touched their lyres with a lighter hand. These sing of the world of fashion and of pleasure

under various guises, with here and there a note of regret for the past:

The quaint old dress, the grand old style,
The mots, the racy stories,
The wine, the dice, the wit, the bile,
The hate of Whigs and Tories.

The motley show of Vanity Fair appeals to them, the lights and shadows of that world "where the young go to learn, and the old to forget." These writers of "vers de société," dealing with London life, recognise that often

The mirth may be feigning, the sheen may be glare,
but with admirable philosophy are brought to confess that

The gingerbread's guilt in Vanity Fair.

What memories are aroused by the mention of St. James's Street and Pall Mall! To the poet St. James's Street is one of classic fame, peopled with the ghosts of bygone celebrities:

Where Saccharissa sigh'd
When Waller read his ditty,
Where Byron lived and Gibbon died,
And Alvanley was witty.

This same Lord Alvanley, of Park Street, St. James's, is spoken of in Captain Gronow's Reminiscences as being perhaps the greatest wit of modern times, though from the anecdotes of his skill in this direction which have come down to us, the statement must be taken with a rather large grain of salt. His dinners in Park Street and at Melton were considered to be the best in England, and, according to Gronow, he never invited more than eight people, and insisted upon having the somewhat expensive luxury of an apricot tart on the sideboard the whole year round. The Lady Dorothea Sidney, to whom, under the sweet-sounding sobriquet of Saccharissa, Edmund Waller addressed so much of his love-poetry, was not, according to Johnson, "to be subdued by the power of verse, but rejected his addresses, it is said, with disdain." In 1639 she married the Earl of Sunderland, "and in her old age meeting somewhere with Waller, asked him when he would again write such verses upon her. 'When you are as young, madam,' said he, 'and as handsome as you were then.'" Sheridan wrote of

The Campus Martius of St. James's Street,
Where the beau's cavalry pass to and fro
Before they take the field in Rotten Row,

and a modern poet recalls the memory of

The plats at White's, the play at Crock's,
The bumpers to Miss Gunning,
The bonhomie of Charlie Fox,
And Selwyn's ghastly funning.

An exile from London would rejoice to greet once again "the long-lost pleasures of St. James's Street," and a similar spirit breathes in the well-known verses of Charles Morris on Pall Mall:

In town let me live, then, in town let me die,
For in truth I can't relish the country, not I.
If one must have a villa in summer to dwell,
Oh! give me the sweet shady side of Pall Mall.

A sentiment such as this might have given pleasure to Charles Lamb, or even such an inveterate lover of the city as Johnson, who, on a certain occasion, when Boswell suggested that as a constant resident he might grow tired of it, exclaimed: "Why, sir, you find no man at all intellectual who is willing to leave London. No, sir, when a man is tired of London he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford." Notwithstanding which opinion, we find Johnson indulging in a grumble against certain shortcomings of the metropolis in his "London," written in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal. Its cosmopolitan character even at that period comes in for severe condemnation, "the needy villain's general home," as he calls it, which:

With eager thirst, by folly or by fate,
Sucks in the dregs of each corrupted state,

and goes on to say:

Forgive my transports on a theme like this,
I cannot bear a French metropolis.

The insecure state of the streets is also borne witness to as follows:

Prepare for death if here at night you roam,
And sign your will before you sup from home.

But, to return to Pall Mall, we find Gay praising it in his "Trivia," or "Art of Walking the Streets of London," a work which contains much that is of interest as regards the city in the days of Queen Anne.

"Oh, bear me," he cries, "to the paths of fair Pall Mall,

Safe are thy pavements, grateful is thy smell.
At distance rolls the gilded coach,
No sturdy carmen on thy walks encroach."

While St. James's Street and Pall Mall thus share the poetic tribute of praise, other parts of London are by no means forgotten. The bustle of Cheapside, the quiet of the Inns of Court, the full tide of life in the Strand, the majesty of the river—all these are to be found recorded in verse. Chaucer has sung of the gay prentice who would sing and hop at every bridal, and who loved the tavern better than the shop, and

When ther eny riding was in Chepe,
Out of the shoppe thider wold he lepe,
And till that he had all the sight ysein,
And dancet wel he would not come agen.

Further citywards the crowded markets of Eastcheap in the reign of Henry the Fourth are recorded by John Lydgate in his "London Lackpenny":

Then I hyed me into Est-Chepe,
One cryes rybbs of befe and many a pye;
Pewter pottes they clattered on a heape,
But for lack of money I myght not spede.

Stow tells us that this part of the town was frequented by butchers, and also cooks, "and such other as sold victuals ready dressed of all sorts. For of old time when friends did meet and were disposed to be merry, they went not to dine and sup in taverns, but to the cooks, where they called for meat what they liked, which they always found well-dressed at a reasonable rate." John Gilpin was a linen-draper in Cheapside, according to Cowper:

Smack went the whip, round went the wheel,
Were ever folks so glad?
The stones did rattle underneath
As if Cheapside were mad.

Wood Street has been immortalised by Wordsworth, for the thrush at the corner with its glad note brought back the memory of country sights and sounds to "Poor Susan":

Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Then the "Mermaid Tavern," near Bread Street, with its memories of Shakespeare and rare Ben Jonson, has appealed to the imagination of later poets. "What things have we seen done at the 'Mermaid'!" was a favourite quotation of Charles Lamb, who loved at the "Salutation Tavern" to recall those "nimble words so full of subtle flame" which rejoiced the hearts of the old dramatists. Keats, again, asks:

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

The Temple calls up a host of equally interesting associations, and has inspired many a bard from the time of Spenser, who wrote of

Those brickly towers,
The which on Thames' broad aged back doe ride.

Once, indeed, you could

Stand in Temple Gardens and behold
London herself on her proud stream afloat,

and here Shakespeare places the scene of the choosing of the red and white rose as the respective badges of the Houses of York and Lancaster. Then, again, we think of Ruth Pinch waiting for her lover there where

The fountain's low singing is heard in the wind
Like a melody bringing sweet fancies to mind,
Some to grieve, some to gladden,

while

Away in the distance is heard the far sound
From the streets of the city that compass it round.

Leaving the "Temple's silent walls" we may lament with Gay the change in the thoroughfare once described by Middleton, the dramatist, as "the luxurious Strand," the home of many a Bishop, graced by the palaces of the Protector Somerset and the great Lord Burleigh; where "Arundel's fam'd structure rear'd its frame," famous for its splendid collection of works of art as far back as the days of James the First, when Thomas Howard was restored to the Earldom of Arundel—"The street alone retains an empty name." The same fate has overtaken many other famous dwellings in this locality.

There Essex' stately pile adorn'd the shore,
There Cecil's, Bedford's, Villiers' now no more.

The Strand seems to have been one of the most crowded parts of London from comparatively early times. George Wither, the Puritan poet, writing in 1628, speaks of it as

... that goodly throwfare betwene
The court and city, and where I have seene
Well-nigh a million passing in one day.

When Boswell talked of the cheerfulness of Fleet Street owing to the constant quick succession of people passing through it, Johnson replied: "Why, sir, Fleet Street has a very animated appearance, but I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing Cross." Here it was that proclamations were formerly made, and the allusion in Swift has become a popular saying:

Where all that passae inter nos,
May be proclaim'd at Charing Cross.

Even to-day there are a few links left to bind the present to the past:

In the midst of the busy and roaring Strand,
Dividing life's current on either hand,
A time-worn city church, sombre and grey,
Waits while the multitude pass away.

The majesty of London asleep, with its "mighty heart lying still," has never been more eloquently described than by Wordsworth in the well-known "Sonnet on Westminster Bridge," in which the quiet spirit of the country seems to breathe and give a touch of Nature to the piles of buildings stretching away as far as eye can reach. With him we can imagine the great city "not as full of noise and dust and confusion, but as something silent, grand, and everlasting":

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.

Many other parts of the town are touched upon by the poets; but to enumerate them all would prove an overlong tale. Thus tavern life has a poetry or versification of its own. Who does not remember the "Tabard Inn" in Southwark, and the pilgrims, "well nine-and-twentie in a companie," who would ride to Canterbury? Or again, the association of Tennyson with the tavern in Fleet Street, pulled down, alas! in 1881:

O plump head waiter at the Cock,
To which I most resort,
How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock.
Go fetch a pint of port.

Andrew Marvel's verses remind us of the sundial which once stood in the Privy Garden at Whitehall, and of the escapades of the Merry Monarch's courtiers:

This place for a dial was too insecure,
Since a guard and a garden could not it defend,
For so near to the Court they will never endure
Any witness to show how their time they mispend.

Much has been written of Westminster Abbey:

They dreamed not of a perishable home
Who thus could build.

The last words of Henry the Fourth, according to Shakespeare, were:

Bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie.
In that Jerusalem shall Henry die.

At the old Gate House prison of Westminster, Richard Lovelace wrote the beautiful song,

Stone walls do not a prison make.

The beauties of the Parks and of Kensington Gardens have been celebrated in verse.

Of all parts of England Hyde Park hath the name,
For coaches and horses and persons of fame,
goes the old ballad. A modern poet asks concerning Rotten Row,

Who now performs a caracole,
and continues,

We're clad to climb a Perthshire glen,
There's nothing of the haute école
In Rotten Row from eight to ten.

Matthew Arnold loved the countrified aspect of Kensington Gardens:

In this lone open glade I lie,
Screened by deep boughs on either hand,
And at its end to stay the eye
Those black-crowned, red-boled pine-trees stand:

As a contrast to this rural calm we have another poet praising Piccadilly:

Shops, palaces, bustle and breeze,
The whirring of wheels and the murmur of trees;
By night or by day, whether noisy or stilly,
Whatever my mood is, I love Piccadilly.

Thus have "Ballads of Babylon" been sung in all ages in various keys.

IDLING AT MONTE CARLO.

THE baggage men at Genoa winked at each other when I bade them register my portmanteaux to Monte Carlo. Methought, too, their eyes sought the region of my pockets somewhat compassionately.

But in truth they made a mistake, if they fancied I was going to the fair spot as a victim. I believe I have learnt better than that. Besides, I had but three spare days at my disposal and money left only for their provision. I did not contemplate playing the fool with my few surviving napoleons, and bringing myself to the humiliating point which compels either a peremptory wire to England for funds, an appeal to an hotel-keeper, or a visit to a Hebrew with my watch and chain in hand to back my request for a loan at about one hundred per cent. per diem.

No, the true way to catch the flavour of this most alluring nook is to go as a spectator of the folly of others. The Casino administration don't want such visitors. Their notices in the saloons observe that persons who do not play are not invited to take seats at the roulette tables. But, on the other hand, they cannot in decency ask every applicant for a ticket to the rooms: "Does monsieur propose to risk any money, and if so, how much?" Nor would such a course profit them. It would make too little allowance for the insidious fascination of the game.

The administration wisely therefore inscribes in its ledgers the names of all decently dressed persons—and some scarcely that—who take off their hats to it in the official "bureau" and proffer their request.

That was how I came to be standing with the rest at the middle table in the middle room of the suite of gaming apartments; this, too, only an hour after my arrival at the hotel.

Never had the beautiful coast seemed to me more lovely. In England bitter, humid cold had held us shivering. Here the sunshine was like a caress. The sea throbbled blue against the russet rocks with their garniture of aloes and prickly pear. One walked gaily up and down the steep roads free of overcoat, charmed by the distant purple headlands; Monaco's bold fortress rock; the gay villas, white-faced, profuse in ornament, and red-roofed; and tickled in thoughts at least—perhaps in pocket to boot—by the two assuming pinnales of the Casino, like the asses' ears of

human imbecility set jeeringly towards the heavens.

The old set of people, of course. Over-dressed women, tinkling with jewellery and leaving behind them in the mild, still air an asphyxiating trail of lavender or "poudre de riz"; white-haired men, spruce as Generals, with the brightness of eye that appertains rather to sweet seventeen than hoary seventy; damsels fair to see, but not good to know; undergraduates from our English Universities, exalted with hope or with ominously clouded faces; colonists with pockets full of money, which they are prepared to empty in their enjoyment of what they call "a little flutter"; seedy, absorbed persons who are thinking still, as they thought years ago, how on earth they could have been mad enough to play on the previous day against their luck, and so lose those precious forty or fifty francs; and amid these hunters of the tables, shrewd valetudinarians, Germans of all kinds, from the student to the bridegroom—his bride is nearly sure to be pretty—and a multitude of ladies of an uncertain age, who love the music and excitement of Monte Carlo in the season, though if you mentioned the tables they would shake their heads in sorrowful condemnation of the iniquity!

I suppose while gambling continues to be licensed here, there will be little variation in the character of its patrons.

"A bad season, monsieur!" the hotel porter had murmured to me, cap in hand, in the hotel hall.

So much the better, thought I. A bad season meant a front room looking on the water, which I knew would anon be lit by a full moon and with the tiers of Monaco's lamps climbing the darkness like—like nothing except the modern presentment of a rocky town seen under civilised conditions after sunset.

It was even so; I could not have been more snugly or picturesquely berthed.

This settled to my entire contentment, I strolled to the Casino. The chief commissioner, or ticket distributor—to give him his more plebeian but exact title—was in an unhallowed temper when I, too, demanded admission. He pretended that my French accent was difficult for him—an absurd thing. And after that he seemed to think that he and his masters were doing me a favour in subscribing my ticket—a still more patently absurd thing. He and I, in fact, parted with bows as inimically genial as those of two diplomatists who have,

metaphorically speaking, just been shaking the national fist in each other's faces.

"Faites votre jeu, monsieur!"

The old cry, here, there, and yonder; the old sounds and smells that it recalls; the chink of gold and silver; the rattle of the ball; the murmurs of mortals, and the suffocating sweetness of a hundred different perfumes on as many different skins; all mingled in the luxurious rooms that shun ventilation as they would a convocation of the world's clergy.

"I say, what a nuisance—I've got no more with me!"

I heard the words close to me. A handsome woman spoke thus to a martial-looking gentleman with white moustache, waxed, and the air of half a Mephistopheles. The gentleman professed desolation, pleaded poverty the most dire, opened his palms, smiled, and sent his attention back to the table.

The lady rustled softly elsewhere. The odds are about four to one that she tried a Briton next, and the younger the better for her chances.

At this table the number fourteen had twice occurred in four spins of the ball. You may imagine the consequences. At each end of it the gamblers struggled to put their crowns and napoleons on the "middle dozen," or the pair, trio, quartette, or transversal including the number fourteen. This same number was also largely covered as a sole investment.

A millionaire or something of the kind had just arrived at the table. He had a bundle of one-thousand franc notes in his hand, two or three of which the table's cashier obligingly changed for him. This gave him a double handful of gold pieces; and these gold pieces he dispersed about the table with an indifference to method that evidently wrung the vitals of the habitués and habituées who trade on five-franc pieces alone. The numbers from twelve to sixteen he almost covered with his gold. As a final freak, he threw a five-hundred franc note upon zero.

This venture brought the gentleman about eight hundred francs, and cost him rather more than three thousand.

"Serve him right!" said the looks of the five-franc people as plainly as could be.

But the millionaire only smiled and prepared to be more lavish than ever. Though the number thirty-three had come up instead of fourteen or any of its neighbours, he did not mean to desert these likely "teena." Again he scattered his gold;

and again his losses were several fold his gains. Yet a third time he ventured. Five thousand francs were spread about the cloth. A note for a thousand francs lay upon number fourteen.

The good gentleman at any rate provided us with a little agreeable excitement.

But number three came up, which had been by him totally neglected.

Then he went his way elsewhere, no more concerned at having dropped about five hundred pounds in two minutes than you or I would be to lose a pin.

So coy a dame is Fortune, and so irritating, that she must needs the next spin bring number fourteen once more to the front. The five-franc players looked at each other. The millionaire ought not to have been so impatient. If he had increased his stakes once more he would have made that table's bank totter.

I left the rooms to draw a full pure breath outside. How big the trunks of the palms have grown! One may look about in the tropics a good deal and fail to find such superb specimens of tropical trees.

The vigilant gendarmes, in their bright crimson and blue, are as numerous as ever in the gardens. It is a bore that they should spoil the vistas as they do. Even as the lackeys within the Casino are for ever turning their eyes about the floor, searching for dropped pieces, so here in the gardens the soldiers have an uncomfortable air of practised psychologists. They seem to be straining to read what is in your mind as you wander in these glorious green avenues, steeped in solitude though within stone's throw of the Casino. I have seen an enthusiastic German botanist followed to and fro here for minutes by a suspicious man in crimson and blue. The botanist was seedy in his attire, and as absorbed as the genius is supposed to be. He looked like one meditating about the insufficiency of life unless cheered by the luck at the tables that had not been his portion.

By the sea, on the semicircular green beneath the terrace, above which the Casino lifts high its meretricious face, they were pigeon-shooting. A hundred or two visitors were watching the sport—so it is called—chatting under parasols, laughing and jesting. When the shot was heard they looked to see if it was a kill or a miss. Perhaps the bird was hit, but not mortally. It fluttered round and round and settled on an adjacent roof. Or it was hit badly and the brisk retriever had no difficulty in

fetching it to have its neck wrung as a finale. Under the stimulus of these scenes the visitors laughed, and talked, and jested, and the ladies congratulated themselves and their gowns on the regal weather.

Thence to the concert-room, at half-past two in the afternoon, to stare at the wealth of carved work and gilding everywhere; and to yawn—until the famous band began to play.

About a thousand of us were present—I write at a venture—and nine hundred or so were yawning in the first five minutes. Not from weariness of the music. That were unlikely. One does not hear such instrumentalism elsewhere. But the polluted air oppressed the lungs. I, for my part, felt a hot desire to kick off the gilded dome, and take my chance of the falling chandelier—a thing that looks tons in weight—all for the sake of a pure breath or two from outside, and a glimpse of the natural sky.

Thence back to the saloons for the interval.

An English Member of Parliament interested me for a few moments. He was here with his daughter, a pretty and, I judge, excitable girl.

"Will you have a coin?" he asked her, smiling, as they stood by a *trente-et-quarante* table.

"Y-e-s," was the reply, with a blush, as if the thought occurred that it was not quite proper.

The girl put the napoleon on the cloth nearest to her. She knew, of course, no more than Julius Cæsar what she was doing.

"Oh—it's gone!" she turned and exclaimed with a start, when the cards had settled its fate and the croupier took it to himself.

"Will you have another?" asked papa, still smiling.

"Oh, yes," said the girl.

This time there was a win.

"Let it stay," said papa, with the confident face of one who knows things.

It stayed and doubled itself twice.

"I think that ought to do for you," then observed papa, and he playfully touched the girl's chin.

The latter took her gold pieces blushing. There was an eagerness and yet wonder in her face that made one anxious. She did not seem at all to want to return to the concert-room.

From the Casino I strolled into the town, which has stretched itself largely of late.

The jewellers' windows are as attractive as ever. The diamonds therein make one blink with their brightness.

"Will not monsieur enter and make a selection? There are some charming pendants for watch-chains that monsieur may like to distribute among his friends."

So spoke a courteous lady, coming upon me from a shop.

The pendants in question mostly bore inscriptions of the amorous kind: "Think of me!" "Thine for ever!" "My heart and thine!" and that sort of thing.

I made my excuses to the lady, but she insisted. It would, she said, help monsieur to kill an idle quarter of an hour, if he allowed her to have the pleasure of showing him some of the shop's pretty trifles.

I yielded and was lost.

However, it was the easiest thing in the world to console myself with the reflection that the cost of the gold trifle with the loving words upon it was less than the single napoleon I might risk—and lose—in one instant on the green cloth tables over the way.

A flower shop!

This, too, was good to see. The roses, and violets, and lilies, and camellias—in mid January! How could the temptation of sending a small box of the pretty gems—outvying the diamonds yonder—be resisted?

Then on in the day's declining sunshine by the high-road that leads, eventually, to Nice: past one white hotel after another; villas, palatial and elegant, perched on the chimney-pots of those beneath them—so it seemed—lodging-houses, pensions, shops; with the bright ripple of the Mediterranean seen away on the left, and Monaco's headland growing nearer.

As a building site these primeval cliffs and olive-woods of Monte Carlo must at one time have looked difficult. But money works marvels. The red mountain of the Dog's Head will soon, one could imagine, have nothing but residences to gaze down upon betwixt itself and the sea.

Anon it is time to dress for dinner and prepare for the pleasing conundrums of one's neighbours. The air is so mild, and the moon's beams on the water so fair to see, that I dress with the window thrown wide open. Monte Carlo's lights are only conjecturable—or rather half so—but those of Monaco furrow the southern horizon.

While I wash I hear the chink of money in the next room. Has he—or she—lost or won? Perhaps the truth will soon out.

But no. One must not expect childish confidences between strangers at these Monte Carlo dinner-tables. The silences are, rather, most eloquent—for a time.

I am cheek] by jowl with a German having a most comfortable stomach, and with a hooked nose. The idea occurs to me that he is a money-lender. Now I know better, and apologise to his memory for the casual imputation conjecture put upon him.

Anything—even inexcusable audacity—seems better than this funereal reticence over the fish as well as the soup. I proffer a remark to my neighbour. He does not take kindly to it at first. As clear as anything, he suffers from a temper of some description. But I do not let him glide out of my hands thus easily.

And by-and-by I have my reward. His little local history is soon told to me, with impressive lowerings of voice.

Large, firm-natured man though he is—it is written on his features—he has come hither from the north merely for a little bout with the tables.

"I give myself a holiday and I bring with me three thousand marks—one hundred and fifty pounds—and I hope it shall last me three weeks. But I have not done well—I have not, and that's the truth. Yesterday I play from two o'clock until ten, and I lose eight hundred marks in the time."

I mention the evening hours that will succeed dinner and the possibility of better fortune awaiting him. It is a lesson in human nature's credulity to see how this strong-minded person grasps this meagre straw of hope held out to him by a stranger. And from that time forward the gentleman's tongue requires a bridle rather than a laxative.

Afterwards the methodical stroll through the gardens with a cigar. Hundreds are in the same case, and the Casino is our common goal.

Within there is no sitting room in the vestibule. In one corner a gaudy, painted woman is puffing at a cigarette brazenly. She exchanges nods of good-fellowship with passing mankind. Two or three are turning their pockets inside out in the crowd—reckless of making the public the confidante of their misfortunes. Some are coming from the rooms with heads erect and smiles of triumph, their hands fondly in their pockets among bank-notes and gold pieces. And to and fro between the marble pillars of the hall, as motley a host of mortals as you may see anywhere pace up and down, smoking, and chattering,

and musing. A dozen or so ladies with white hair are among the crowd. Old men are still more numerous. There are maidens with bare shoulders, indifferent to the bold looks they excite and the contemptuous glances shot at them by others of their sex. A few sheepish youths are with the rest of us, directing greedy eyes towards the rooms to which their verdancy denies them the much-desired privilege of entrance.

Another concert at half-past eight, with unconquerable drowsiness in its train. I fairly sleep through two of its choicer "morceaux," and so do others.

After this one more hour's excitement and semi-suffocation at the tables suffices—for the night. I see a woman make a frenzied and tearful appeal to the croupier for money that she vows was hers though filched by another. The croupier shrugs his shoulders; he is used to such tears. Were they of the crocodilian kind? Who shall say?

I do not like the tables towards eleven o'clock, the closing time. It seemed better to see the night into its last hour seated outside, with a cooling drink and another cigar, and the lively procession of the elated and the disappointed passing before me as on a canvas done in colour.

Then home to the hotel, and the mosquito curtains, and the radiant moonlight on the water as seen from the embroidered pillow to my bed.

The man who goes to Monte Carlo to play misses the flavour of Monte Carlo. He is one of the ingredients of the dish—for the service of such outsiders as myself on this occasion.

THE CHILDREN.

ONLY to keep them so,
Soft, warm, and young;
The wee, feeble fingers,
The babbling tongue.
Tears that we kiss away,
Smiles that we win;
Careless of knowledge,
As guiltless of sin.
Only to keep them so,
Frank, true, and pure;
Of our full wisdom
So lovingly sure.
Our frown all they shrink from,
Our fiat their law;
Our store, whence all gladness
They fearlessly draw.
Only to keep them so,
Sweet hands that cling,
Sweet lips that laugh for us,
Sweet tones that ring;
Curly that we train to wave,
Feet that we guide,
Each fresh step a wonder,
Each new word a pride.

Only to keep them so !
 Women and men
 Are the tinies that circled us
 Lovingly then.
 Gentle and good to us,
 Patient and strong,
 Guarding our weaknesses,
 Bearing us long.
 Tenderly mocking us,
 Old thoughts and ways,
 That scarcely keep measure
 With life's rapid days.
 Good to us—waiting.
 Our sunset shows fair !
 But, only to have them so,
 Just as they were !

REMINISCENCES OF AN EGG COLLECTOR.

ALL men and most women at some time in their lives have a mania for collecting. This mania takes many forms and lasts for various periods—sometimes all the life, notably when the matter accumulated is money.

With schoolboys perhaps the favourite objects are postage stamps, crests, and birds' eggs. Autographs, postmarks, botanical and geological specimens, stuffed birds, and coins are also gathered in ; but few of the many hobbies taken up are followed out and studied in a methodical, useful manner in after life. Boys tire as they grow older, and the collections are lost or destroyed, and often valuable acquisitions pass out of sight and knowledge.

Elementary but reliable scientific books are so cheap now that they are within the bounds of any schoolboy's pocket-money, and a little less spent on "tuck" would enable him to get a good grounding in his particular hobby, and make him take more interest in his collections, so that they might become a useful pleasure to him all his life. Let him be very careful to label all his specimens with the date and locality, and the correct name if he is certain about it, and pay special attention to the fact that the labels must not on any consideration get mixed. Carelessness in labelling is a very bad, but a very easy fault.

It is such a temptation to put the name of some rare species to any specimen that in any way resembles the description or prints, without any regard to the fact that perhaps the specimen in question may only have been taken once or twice in the country. This fault is very easy to fall into in the case of birds' eggs, a form of collecting prominent in my mind. The eggs of many species of birds vary so much that there are several distinct types, many of them closely re-

sembling those of allied species. I well remember the number of species an ambitious schoolfellow of mine coined out of about a dozen eggs of the common guillemot, a very good example in point. Another instance is the little blue egg of the dunnoek or hedge accentor. Many a schoolboy imagines he sees a resemblance in the shape, size, or colour to the redstart's eggs, and promptly labels some of them with that name, without any regard to the fact that he took the eggs out of a nest in a hedge, and probably might have seen the bird if he had taken the trouble to look. The eggs of warblers and ducks give scope for an endless amount of fraudulent naming, for such it certainly is. A rough note-book, with a few facts about the locality of the nest, the shape and materials it is built of, number of eggs, and appearance or behaviour of the bird, is always useful, and will prevent or correct error in after years.

If the boy takes care of his details and follows up the pursuit, he will some day be glad of the drudgery, and will not only find that his collection will be useful to him and to others, but that it will be a source of never-ending pleasure in recalling to him remembrances of the happiest days of his life.

The collection must not be an accumulation of as many specimens as possible, that is a useless cruelty.

The wholesale destruction of life never makes a man scientific, nor is it an edification to any one. Let the lad collect carefully what he wants and only what he wants, and do it all with the spirit of love for the beautiful creatures Heaven has placed round about him and put within his grasp. Let him care far more about the note-book than the cabinet or the gun.

It is of the memories brought up by looking over a collection that I propose to write—not the scientific value. That speaks for itself. Each specimen taken by oneself recalls the spot and the occasion ; bought or exchanged specimens never have this value. The mere accumulation of numbers can never teach much or give this special pleasure.

Opening the drawers and glancing down, our eyes light on a clutch of kestrel's eggs, and the subtle influence of memory carries us with it, and we are in a small wood on a well-preserved estate.

In front of us is a tall, smooth-boled tree, and by our side the keeper with his gun. Just over the edge of the nest we can see the tail

of the bird projecting. The keeper moves a few paces away to where he can command a clear reach of sky, and then we smite the tree with our sticks. Off flies the lady to her doom. The keeper rapidly raises his weapon, takes a quick sight, and the murdered mother falls at our feet. A smart shin up the tree, and eggs and mother are ours. Note how rubbed and denuded of feathers her poor maternal breast is. Poor kestrel! our desire for you and yours prevented us from giving our opinion that you were a very harmless bird in the coverts, and much preferred mouse to pheasant.

Next to the kestrels, a clutch of merlins carries us to the rocky cliffs of Wales.

The sea is breaking with a roar on the rocks below us, tossing the long brown seaweed about in a mass of foam. An oystercatcher is whistling anxiously on a rock near the water. Two rock pipits have followed us in great alarm for a quarter of a mile, and are just turning, satisfied that we are safely past their cosy little nest, when up rises the little blue hawk with a chattering scream, and dashes away round the point. Her mate is sitting watching on a wall near at hand, and quickly follows her. A careful search for a few minutes, and in a roughly scratched hollow on the top of the cliff we find her four red eggs, and the prize is ours. On these same cliffs we remember how, suspended by a cow's halter borrowed from a neighbouring farm, we step by step descended the precipitous crags to take a kestrel's nest. What a curious sensation it was, as we left hold of the friendly rocks and bent down to the nest, with the waves curling and surging on the ugly stones below! A great black-backed gull's egg recalls an island close at hand; and how we sat waiting for the tide to go down sufficiently for us to run across the slippery rocks—for it is only an island when the tide is up—only to find the nest empty and the birds gone. We obtained the egg later from a farmer who had taken it.

Another glance, and we are back in a Cheshire fox covert—peering into a sparrowhawk's nest containing five beautifully mottled eggs. The keeper said he placed a trap in that nest the year before, and sure enough, under the eggs and a layer of sticks is the rusty but still un sprung trap that failed in its fell purpose.

Then the scene shifts to a larch plantation by the side of one of the most beautiful lakes in Cumberland, and in a tree over-

hanging the path we are almost touching a tawny owl, seated on three eggs in the old nest of a carrion crow. What delightful memories that owl's egg conjures up; a peaceful spring evening, a lazy drift in a boat, no light save from the stars and the soft sheen of the water, not a ripple disturbing the glassy surface, not a sound but the occasional quack of a mallard or the chuckle of a belated waterhen. Suddenly from the wooded bank comes the weird, mournful, but beautiful note of the tawny owl. Hardly have the echoes been thrown back from the mountains when far up the lake another answers, and then another, till the quiet night resounds with their musical calls.

A very prettily marked clutch of eggs of the familiar little robin takes us to perhaps one of the wildest and most striking of all the English lake district scenes. We are standing in the road that leads up the lovely valley of Wastdale; to our right lies the calm but awesome lake, with the dark, steep slopes rising sheer from the deep water opposite. In front is that wonderful panorama of peaks—Sca Fell, The Pikes, Great End, Great Gable, Green Gable, and the winding tracks over Sty-head, Scarf Gad, and Blacktail, finishing with Pillar and Steeple on the left.

Close to the robins our eyes wander to five pearly white eggs, nothing but empty shells of dipper or water-ouzel; but we, looking at them, remember lying on the grass in one of those beautiful stony valleys by the side of a clear, babbling Cheshire trout-stream, which only a few miles below changes its crystal transparency for the "dank and foul" of manufactories and dyeworks, and flows on to pollute that great artery of the north—the Mersey. Here, above the smoke and din of works, all is "undefiled." The ring-ouzel is singing in the heather above us, the distant crow of the grouse sounds from moors, the trout rises in the deep pool at our feet.

Clear and cool, clear and cool,
By laughing shallow and dreaming pool,
Cool and clear, cool and clear,
By shining shingle and foaming weir.
Under the crag where the ouzel sings,
And the ivied wall, where the church bell rings,
Undefiled for the undefiled,
Play by me, bathe in me, mother and child.

And there might be the veritable water-ouzel singing under the bank. What a pretty little song it is! Now he dives into the water and runs along the pebbles at the bottom, searching for caddis worms, then

jumping on to a stone he shakes the glittering drops off in a perfect little shower, and bows and curtsies to us; when here comes his mate, settling one minute near him, as if to enquire if all is safe, then up she goes to her sheltered nest under the overhanging bank. We rise and wade across the stream, and then begins a chapter of accidents.

The nest is high up, ten feet above a deep pool, and there is only a narrow ledge below. We cannot reach it from above, so we must try the ledge. One of us, in turning a sharp corner, places his foot on a projecting piece of wood; there is a sharp crack, a wild clutch at nothing, and a rapid plunge into the icy cold water. One stroke and the ledge is reached. Then the wet and lighter robber shins on to the shoulders of his companion, and can just manage to reach the nest. Stretching up, he feels for the little opening, and out pops the frightened dipper, betraying her front door. Feeling for the entrance, he loosens two big stones, which roll on to the pate and shoulders of the supporting thief, cracking his crown, but happily he stands firm.

The eggs are handed down, and once more we are safe on the bank, one very damp and cold, the other with a broken head; but in possession of the five unbroken eggs before us now.

Here let me warn the young collector, warn him from experience of my own. However valuable the prize, it can never justify him in risking his life or even his limbs. Little annoyances and adventures like the one just mentioned only add zest and fun to the enterprise; but if cliff-climbing is to be attempted, far more serious consequences may ensue unless great care be taken. Always remember two facts: first, that you cannot always climb down safely where you can climb up with ease; and secondly, that every foot and hand hold must be carefully tested before any weight is placed upon it, for in many places a slip means a funeral.

We were climbing for jackdaws' nests one day in Wales. The cliff was some two hundred feet almost sheer from the sea. My companion was above me; and finding the rock rotten and insecure, I called up to him, "Be careful, it is loose." The next second he shot past me, dropping upon a ledge twenty feet below. In the few seconds before he spoke my feelings were not enviable. What if he is killed? What if a limb is broken? How shall I get him home, miles away from help? But a reassuring though melancholy voice came

from the ledge below, "It is rather loose"; and luckily nothing but a little stiffness was the result.

Had the ledge not been there, or if it had been narrower, I probably should never have cared to relate this experience. After that we were more cautious, and consequently our fate was better than that of a poor little lad who, when taking herring-gulls' eggs close to this spot, dropped over and was never seen again. The chapter of accidents, with the explanation, "while searching for sea-birds' eggs," is a very long and a very sad one, and no boy can be too careful.

Still scanning the collection, our eyes rest on the big, rough-shelled eggs of the fulmar petrel, and we are in thought standing in the bows of a small steamer, tossing up and down on the huge billows of the Atlantic, leaving the coast of Scotland and the Outer Hebrides behind; Lewis and Harris looming blue and misty to the north-east, North Uist and Benbecula to the south-east. Far away on the western horizon a little hazy rock rises—the island of St. Kilda. Flying by, with no concern for us, are solan geese; their long, powerful, pointed wings carrying them straight to and from their rocky home of Boreray, an island of the group. Now one circles high in air, and closing his wings, drops head downwards like a stone with a mighty splash into the water, and we know that some poor fish has met its doom. Puffins, razorbills, and guillemots are thick upon the water. Kittiwake and herring-gulls follow in the wake of the boat, with barks and laughs, watching with their keen eyes for any stray morsel fit to eat that may be thrown overboard.

No British sea-bird can compete with the fulmar in aerial evolutions. Watch them rising and falling with the waves—or swooping round with one wing-tip hardly an inch from the surface, but never touching. We may watch for hours and apparently see no wing stroke; the bird seeming to keep up with us simply by gliding through the air on outspread pinions set at different angles to the breeze.

Then the landing on the slippery rocks of that interesting island, the most westerly inhabited rock of the Hebrides; visiting the curious little colony, who depend almost entirely on the birds that swarm there, and upon charity, for the inhabitants are terrible beggars; the greetings, the bargainings, the noise, the smell,

are things never to be forgotten. The fulmar harvest is at its height, and most of the men are away catching the young birds, but we obtain some of this year's eggs from the women. It is evident that ornithologists have been there before us, for all the eggs are carefully and neatly side-blown with drill and blowpipe. Where is there another spot in our islands at all like St. Kilda?—the semicircular line of huts with corrugated iron roofs, facing the only safe landing-place, the only bay in the group. Behind the street, as it is called, the land rises rapidly to that great cliff, Conagher, one thousand two hundred and twenty feet above the sea, with an almost sheer precipice on the western side. In front of the "town" the island of Doon, barely separate from St. Kilda, shields the bay and makes it a fairly safe anchorage save in a north-easter. How we remember all the too short time spent on the island! Even now a sniff at the eggs brings back even more forcibly how the island seemed to reek of fulmar oil; the food, the clothes, the people, the very houses reeked with the pungent odour.

Some puffins' eggs, and we are away and on another island, this time in Cardigan Bay. Never do we remember a more perfect scene; the sparkling sea is a rich deep green, the air is a dancing haze of heat, the whitewashed walls of the light-house on the island near are dazzling in the sunlight. In front of us is a simple wooden cross; a priest stands by our side, pointing out where they have dug out in the sods the rough plan of a monastery. A motley group of men stand by—his assistants—a curious gathering to meet in Protestant little Wales: a Welsh and an Irish priest, a few Welsh lads, and two or three swarthy Spaniards.

The monastery was never finished; a few years later we heard with regret of the death of Father Hughes, the originator of the scheme. We remember seeing and hearing him, as he crossed the bay alone in his little sailing boat, singing merrily as he steered for his island home.

As we stand there talking to our genial host, and listening to the deep boom of the bell-buoy, marking a treacherous rock near, our eyes are wandering to the crowded bird-life round us.

Wherever we look are puffins—puffins standing in crowds at the mouths of their holes; puffins flying up and down; puffins in shoals on the water below us; puffins here, puffins there, puffins everywhere.

What humorous-looking birds they are, with big ungainly but brightly coloured beaks, short red legs, and squat bodies! They are exceedingly tame, and allow us to come within a few yards of them, before shuffling away and dropping over the cliffs into the sea. How we stand and laugh at their ridiculous faces, and how they croak and gurgle back at us!

The ground is honeycombed with their burrows, and nearly every hole contains an egg. How they bite and scratch us with their huge bills and sharp claws as we drag them out; for though their legs look very weak, their talons project beyond the webs, and soon draw blood. While we are getting the eggs one of the boatmen calls, "A seal, a seal," and runs off to fetch a gun—too late, luckily for the seal, who sinks rapidly out of sight. The ledges below us are covered with guillemots and razorbills, and looking landward we can see across the mile and a half of sparkling water that the cliffs of the coast-line are white with swarms of these same birds. We are told of "mackerel cocks" flying and calling at night; birds that come with the mackerel and are seldom seen in the daytime; and we are lucky enough to see a string of Manx shearwaters hurriedly flying across the water, and conclude that these are the birds they mean.

Once more we are in Cheshire, pushing a boat amongst the reeds of one of the most strictly preserved of the meres.

Suspended high up among the tall stems we discover the lovely deep nest of the little reed-warbler; and note how the bird scolds us, as it hangs sideways on a stalk.

Near at hand is a floating mass of decomposing rubbish that contains four eggs of the great crested grebe. Note how the careful mother, before alighting quietly under the surface, has covered her eggs with dirty flags. They are so stained with the green slime that no amount of rubbing will ever make them regain their original purity. There is the bird swimming far away now, her long thin neck straight up from the water, crowned with the nuptial crest of feathers, her body nearly submerged beneath the surface. With a graceful bow she almost leaps out of the water, and disappears under the surface to rise again fifty or a hundred yards away.

The metallic-voiced coots are swimming about outside the reeds, ever keeping a watchful eye upon our movements; and

from the banks we hear the harsh grating cry of the sedge-warbler.

From Cheshire to Northumberland is a long stride, but with a glance at these black-headed gull's eggs we can step it; and we are standing by a marshy pool, on the high ground overlooking the valley where Surrey pitched his camp, when he led his troops to Flodden Field. The water is covered with the little white gulls, while hundreds more fly croaking and screaming over our heads. Mallard spring up from their nests; a pair of teal follow them; and round us, on nearly every clump, are clutches of the beautiful mottled eggs of the gulls. The birds are not often disturbed up here on the moors; and after choosing a few varied specimens we leave them to settle down again, and retreat followed by a few poor weeping Rachels for a mile or so.

Then on to the rocky islands of Wales again, where the common terns lay their two or three eggs on the bare rock; where we scramble about and take what we want; while our boatman keeps his craft from being beaten to pieces against the jagged rocks with an oar, and argues in Welsh to a man who has rowed out to prevent us from disturbing the birds, and threatens us with the utmost rigour of the law, which does not terrify us much.

And then to the shingly beach, where the more local lesser tern breeds; where we sit for hours watching the valiant little sea-swallows chasing the marauding black-headed gulls and crows away from their eggs. If these thieves can find the eggs they must have keen sight indeed, for we might pace up and down for hours and never come across a single nest, unless we accidentally trod upon one; for the lesser terns' and ring-dotterels' eggs are so perfectly coloured in unison with their surroundings that mere searching for them will only waste time and temper. But we sit quietly on the sandhills, and soon the foolish bird drops down straight upon the nest. Fixing our eyes upon the spot, and not allowing our attention to be distracted by the bird when she rises, we walk straight to the spot, plant a stick in the sand and work carefully round it, and within a yard or two we invariably find the nest. Even then if we take a look round, it is difficult to find it again, the harmony of colouring between the eggs and the pebbly sand is so complete.

Then literally into a rabbit-hole, digging away with a borrowed spade and our hands,

until we grub out sixteen shelducks' eggs, ten feet from the mouth; only two of which we can take, as they are chipping and will shortly be hatched. Of the two unchipped eggs, one contains a dead youngster, and the other is addled. Oh, the horrors of blowing them! Again, sitting one on each side of a pail, blowing ourselves out of breath, and making our heads and ears ache, getting out the contents of one hundred and twenty guillemots' eggs, every one of them with different markings!

Next, standing by a mere-side, disputing with a foolish swan for the possession of her unfertilised eggs. We reach them with a scoop at the end of a long stick, for we dare not venture within range of her powerful wings. She hisses and fights with the savageness that only a swan can show; but we take two or three, and leave the poor deluded bird to continue sitting on the remainder till she tires, for they can never hatch. So memory carries us to various scenes and through many incidents. Searching the moors for curlews, golden plover, and twite; the woods for blackcaps and hawfinches; the hedgerows for shrikes and many smaller game; knee-deep in a stream, grubbing out a filthy kingfisher's nest; climbing for jays, carrions, and jack-daws; and lying down on the sand to watch ring-dotterels to their nests. Moor, marsh, wood, hedgerow, lake-side, and sea-coast, each with its special treasures and individual beauties.

And so one could go on yarning about every self-taken specimen in the cabinet; each one has its individuality in the memory of the collector, and though they may be pretty objects, or of scientific value to the outsider, the real pleasure to be derived is only to be enjoyed by the person who has actually assisted at the taking of the specimen; who watched the mother bird, and noted her beauties; who saw the scenery and enjoyed the fresh air, the sun, and the rain—for under certain circumstances rain is not at all bad. Let the lad who collects learn to love the objects he collects; to take more than a passing interest in them; and what is only a hobby in his youth will be a lifelong joy and pleasure to him.

A LITTLE COQUETTE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

THE morning of the ball dawned, and found Hilda looking pale and washed out.

Her mother glanced at her sharply and disapprovingly every now and then.

"You had better go for a good quick walk, and get a little colour into your cheeks," she remarked after breakfast was over, at which meal Hilda had eaten nothing. "You will look quite plain to-night if you don't take care. I should like you to do Lord Langridge credit."

"Yes, I suppose I ought to," said Hilda languidly, "especially after he has had that wall pulled down on purposes for me. But I am afraid this is one of my plain days, mamma. I am sorry to say they are getting more frequent."

"If you persist in dressing in black, you will look positively haggard," said Mrs. Clifford disapprovingly.

"People will think that I am head over ears in love, then, so it is all right. I don't think a person in my interesting position should be in vulgar health."

"At least you will go out for a blow?" said Mrs. Clifford, abandoning the subject of the black gown as one too hopeless to be further considered.

"No, I think not, mamma. I shall have plenty of exercise to-night, you know."

"You are so obstinate," said Mrs. Clifford fretfully; "you go out in all weathers usually, and on a lovely day like this you mope indoors. You are very trying, Hilda. Langridge was very displeased with you yesterday."

"Was he?" said Hilda carelessly.

Mrs. Clifford valiantly repressed a desire to crush her with the suggestion Langridge made yesterday about breaking off the match. She felt that Hilda was quite equal to saying that she was glad that Langridge had come to his senses at last.

True to her resolution, Hilda did not go out, but the evening found her looking very far from plain. She had managed to call up a colour to her cheek and a sparkle to her eye. Langridge would have no reason to complain of her looks.

They entered the magnificent ball-room a little late. Langridge hurried up to greet and welcome them.

"Does it look nice? Is it all right?" he whispered anxiously to his fiancée as he led her to a charming alcove, hung with the costly garlands that she had chosen.

Hilda gave a glance round, and replied languidly that everything was "quite nice." In reality she was rather impressed by the magnificence of the room, but it was just as well to keep Langridge cool.

"The oddest thing!" he began, as he

sat down by her, "that fellow Curwen's turned up again! Ran up against him yesterday afternoon. We used to be rather chums years ago. He isn't a bad sort."

Hilda opened her soft plumed black fan.

"I hope you didn't ask him here to-night?" she said rather sharply.

"I—I'm awfully sorry. I asked him without thinking," stammered Langridge in confusion. "Don't you like him? I felt I couldn't do anything else."

"Oh, it doesn't matter!" said Hilda. "Another man is a good thing, perhaps."

His anxiety for fear that he had offended her being relieved, Langridge edged a little nearer, and began to compliment her on her dress.

"You look perfectly lovely to-night, Hilda," he remarked admiringly, as he watched the graceful figure in the black and jet that fitted her like a sheath.

"I am glad you like it. Mamma wanted to deck me out in white satin; but it savoured too much of the bridal garland for me. I don't want to be a victim before my time."

"A victim?" said Langridge, in a low voice, taking her programme in his hand, and mechanically writing his initials opposite all the waltzes.

"A willing victim, of course," said Hilda cheerfully. "Come, Langridge, you and I must open the ball, you know!"

The band struck up, and they began to dance. Langridge was not a good waltzer. Hilda did her best not to lose her temper.

"If you didn't tread on my toes quite so much, and hold me with such a fearful grip, I fancy we should get on better," she suggested breathlessly, after they had cannoned into the fourth couple.

"I'm so sorry. I'm afraid I'm very clumsy. But it's jolly, isn't it?"

His face was beaming. Its expression of delight suddenly irritated Hilda.

"It may be jolly, but it is most fatiguing. I really must sit down. My dear Langridge, I should die of suffocation if I danced often with you, and my clothes would be torn to shreds."

Langridge stood back against a wall with the air of a schoolboy who has just been severely reprimanded.

"We will sit out the waltzes, then," he remarked presently, "it will be just as nice."

Hilda yawned behind her fan, and contemplated her programme, which was quite full. She deliberately ran her pencil through four of Langridge's dances.

"It is such bad form to be always dancing together," she said, "and as for sitting out instead, we might as well be Hodge and Betsy at once."

Langridge felt that Hodge and Betsy, in spite of their vulgar unconventionality, would probably have enjoyed themselves more than he was doing.

Hilda sat back and surveyed the room. The ball was a brilliant one, everything that money could do had been done, her programme was crowded, every attention was paid her, she was the queen of the evening. She wondered if she had ever felt so unhappy.

Captain Curwen came up before the waltz was ended. Hilda had been conscious of his presence the moment he had entered the room. Langridge suddenly remembered his duties, and hurried away to greet some new arrivals. Captain Curwen dropped into the vacant seat.

"What made Langridge burst into this ball?" he asked languidly, after a few commonplaces had been exchanged, and the umbrella subject had been worn more threadbare than the umbrella itself. "He's a good little chap, but not quite up to this sort of thing."

Hilda comprehended at once that Captain Curwen was unaware of her engagement to his host.

"Why should he not give a ball?" she demanded.

"Oh, no reason whatever! But goodness gracious me, don't you think that tea-roses, and waltzes, and Langridge sound rather incongruous?"

Hilda's glances followed his. It rested on Langridge's short, stout form reclining ungracefully near a bank of ferns and roses. He had never seemed so utterly commonplace in her eyes.

"The room looks bigger somehow, too," went on Captain Curwen, looking round; "surely the man has had the wall taken down! What tomfoolery!"

He took her programme and looked at it.

"Full up, I see. But there is an extra after supper. Will you give me that?"

He pencilled his initials without waiting for a reply, and walked away.

Hilda sank back with flushed cheeks. She felt she could not tell him of the engagement.

She went through the dances almost mechanically after that. The music seemed too loud, the dresses too gay, the room too light, the perfume of the flowers too heavy.

The ball was a brilliant success, no doubt, but she had never enjoyed anything less. Now and then she caught a glimpse of herself in the glass, and was struck with the almost serpentine grace of her own figure, clad in that sheath of glittering black. She recognised that she was looking her handsomest. A wild, coquettish desire came over her to have Captain Curwen at her feet again. She had made him care once; she would make him care again.

Her dance with Langridge passed almost unheeded. He trod on her toes as heavily, and tore her gown as clumsily as ever; but she never said a word. Langridge was well pleased.

He took her in to supper, and saw that she had everything she wanted before he attended to his other guests. Hilda took all his devotion as a matter of course. She had always done so.

When she re-entered the ball-room it was on Captain Curwen's arm. Only a few couples were waltzing slowly round. The room was almost empty.

He slipped his arm round the glittering waist, and they went circling round together. A very different waltzing this from poor Langridge's scrambles and tumbles. They retired into the conservatory before the music stopped, and ensconced themselves comfortably behind a large palm. Captain Curwen took her fan, and began to wave it to and fro.

"I have just learned who knocked the wall down," he said, smiling at her. "Langridge has informed me that you have made him the happiest of men. Allow me to congratulate you."

Hilda gave a little gasp. He knew that she was engaged; he knew and did not care!

"Thank you," she answered after a moment's pause, during which she collected herself for battle. "Yes, I am responsible for the wall and the roses, and all the other absurdities which you found so incongruous."

"They are not incongruous for you—only for Langridge," he returned, smiling. "I remember you had a leaning towards fal-lals and frivolity always."

He could remember her tastes and not feel a pang that they could never now be of any real interest to him! She felt furiously angry that the power she had once had to move him was no longer in existence.

"Langridge says you are to be married in three months," went on Captain Curwen, without a trace of regret in his voice. "I hope you mean to ask me to the wedding."

"Oh, certainly," answered Hilda, with a strong effort repressing her desire to forbid his presence at that ceremony once and for all. "I—we shall be delighted. I believe Langridge is to be decked in orange blossom as well as myself. It will be a very pretty sight."

He laughed a little.

"No doubt. I wouldn't miss it for worlds! Langridge will look very handsome in orange blossom," he added meditatively.

She took her fan from him and began to play with it.

"I suppose your mother is very glad to have you at home again?" she said, with a determined change of subject.

"She says so. She thinks, however, that I shall find Curwen Manor dull after the dissipation of an Indian life."

"And shall you?"

"At present I feel as if I should be dead of ennui in a week. I dare say your wedding will cheer me up."

"I don't know why you keep harping on my wedding," said Hilda rather sharply.

"It appears to be the one exciting event of the day. Every one I meet asks me how I think you are looking, and how I think Langridge is looking, and whether it is not the most delightful arrangement possible. I am getting quite into the swing myself. I feel I want to talk about nothing but white slippers and kid gloves, and veils and wedding cake."

"How very kind of you! You used not to take such a deep interest in these frivolities in the old days."

"The old days!" He looked at her steadily for a moment. Her eyes met his defiantly. It was as though two antagonists were measuring swords before a duel.

"We are both a good deal wiser since those old days, Hilda. You and I have determined to take the world as we find it—which is by far the best plan."

"You have grown quite philosophical," said Hilda with a short laugh.

"Isn't that a great deal better than being disagreeable—which is what you used to call me in those old days you speak of?"

"I don't know whether it is an improvement or not," returned Hilda vaguely. "I only know that it makes me think of copy-books—and I hate copy-books."

"You have quite a new set of likes and dislikes. I used to find it rather difficult to keep up with the old ones. I am afraid

my brain will not bear the strain of another list."

"It is Langridge's brain that has to stand that strain, fortunately," she responded. "I am thankful to say that none could bear it better."

"No, I should say you were quite cut out for one another," said the Captain amiably. "Langridge is the soul of good nature, and would put up with anything."

"Thank you."

"Don't mention it. I am delighted to bear witness to Langridge's power of endurance. You would be quite beyond most men."

"I suppose you think that Langridge is a fool for wanting to marry me?" said Hilda, with an angry flush.

"Not at all. Some men require constant excitement—and difficulty. I should think you would supply him with both. You must not mind a few home truths, Hilda. Remember, I have known you ever since you had a pigtail and wore short frocks," he added, smiling.

"I can only remember how horrid you used to be," retorted Hilda impetuously.

"Oh, I am a perfect brute, I know—but an unintentional brute after all," said the Captain, smiling again. "You think that I have not improved in these three years?"

"You are worse—much worse," answered his companion, with a shake of the head; "you were hardly to be put up with before, but now you are simply insufferable."

He rose with a little bow, and offered her his arm.

"Let me lead you to Langridge," he suggested; "the very sight of him puts one in a good humour. He looks as if he would like to play skittles after the ball is over. He is bubbling over with energy. Langridge used to be rather good at skittles."

At this moment Langridge's round face appeared at the entrance of the conservatory. He saw the couple at once.

"Oh, here you are," he exclaimed triumphantly, "I have been looking for you everywhere. This is our waltz, Hilda. Shall we sit it out?"

Sitting out a waltz with Langridge was not quite the same thing as sitting out a waltz with Captain Curwen.

"Ob, we will dance it by all means," Hilda said hastily.

As she walked away on Langridge's arm she was perfectly aware that Captain Curwen was scrutinising her at his leisure. She wished for the hundredth time that Langridge was a little taller. There was a

want of dignity about a man who only reached a little higher than her shoulder.

She was heartily thankful when the ball was over. She resolved never to ask Langridge to give another. By the end of the night he was hot, dishevelled, and redder than ever. He followed her everywhere to whisper unwelcome compliments in her ear.

"All the fellows are in love with you," he whispered ecstatically once.

Hilda's glance went to the doorway, where Captain Curwen was standing with a perfectly blank expression of face which betokened extreme boredom.

"Are they?" she said. "I am afraid you exaggerate, Langridge."

But he averred that he did not, and that it would not be natural if every one were not smitten. Who could help loving his Hilda?

But his Hilda was only engaged in angry meditation as to why Captain Curwen had made no effort to dance with her again.

CHAPTER IV.

"NOTHING could be more unfortunate than his turning up again like this, just when he isn't wanted," said Hilda forlornly. "Really, Lucy, I think Providence manages things very badly. We were all so comfortable before."

Lucy, who was sitting well into the fire with her gown pulled up to keep it from being scorched, replied discreetly that it was "a pity."

"A pity, indeed! It is a great deal worse than that. It is intolerably bad taste on his part. Of course it is just like him."

"You couldn't expect Captain Curwen to stay in India for ever, Hilda."

"I never expected him to do anything that he ought to do. But, at least, he needn't have chosen this particular time for settling down in our midst."

"Perhaps it is just as well that you are not yet married," said Lucy slowly.

"I wish to goodness I was, on the contrary. I hate Captain Curwen quite as much as he hates me. Langridge is worth a dozen of him though he is so podgy. But all the same he is very upsetting."

"How did he behave at the ball? I wish I had been there. It was just my luck, having this swelled face."

"He was as impertinent as possible, and said Langridge and I were cut out for one another."

"Do you call that impertinent?" said Lucy, smiling.

"Yes, I do. Poor Langridge was looking his very worst, and the wretch knew it. I wish the poor boy's legs were a little straighter."

"And Captain Curwen did not succumb to your charms again?"

"Hardly! I might have been the veriest scarecrow for all the compliments he paid me. How I should like to bring him to my feet again!"

"Fascinating work for a little coquette like you. But I should say that it was playing with edged tools."

"There isn't any fun in playing with blunt ones, Lucy! No, I shall certainly do my best to bring down that young man's conceit a little."

"You don't seem to consider Lord Langridge much in this playful little scheme of yours," said Lucy.

"Langridge isn't a bit jealous. And he is awfully thick-headed. He wouldn't know it if I carried on a flirtation under his very nose."

"He isn't nearly such a fool as he—as he——" Lucy ended in some confusion and looked appealingly at her friend.

Hilda laughed.

"You needn't be afraid of offending me, my dear. I am not sensitive about Langridge. Perhaps he isn't!"

She departed soon after this, a dainty figure in her furs and bright-winged hat.

On the road home she met her victim. She stopped and held out her hand.

"How do you do?" said Captain Curwen, accepting the hand and the situation with equal gravity. "I hope you are none the worse for your dissipation?"

Hilda flashed a look at him from eyes that used to move him to an inward tumult in the old days.

"Do I look any the worse?" she asked coquettishly.

He scrutinised her calmly, and she flushed a little.

"N-no, I suppose not," he remarked. "Of course you are three years older than when I last saw you."

"That means——?" said Hilda, mortified.

"Nothing more than what I said. One cannot defy time," he answered coolly.

"I think you are the very rudest person I ever knew," said Hilda very angrily.

"Yes, I know. I have accepted the situation, and I thought that you were doing the same. I am a brute, of course."

After a silence he went on :

"But I heard some very flattering remarks made about you at the ball. As Langridge's future wife, you naturally excited much comment. Would you like to hear them?"

"Not at all, thank you."

"There is no accounting for tastes. I should have thought you would have jumped at the chance of seeing yourself as others see you."

"I find seeing myself as you see me quite enough."

"Oh, you may always trust me to tell you the truth, Hilda."

She stopped and looked at him.

"Are you always going to be so horrid to me?" she asked him plaintively.

Captain Curwen privately thought her mouth very pretty at that moment, and her whole expression positively enchanting, but he only replied serenely :

"Not horrid. Oh dear, no. I will pay you the most florid compliments if you like."

"But they will not be sincere," said Hilda, pouting.

"Well, perhaps not," agreed the Captain readily; "but sugar-plums are always pleasant. We don't stop to ask what they are made of."

"Copy-book again!" said Miss Clifford, with a shrug of her shoulders, resuming her walk. "You have only two styles of conversation—both equally disagreeable."

The red gables were in sight now, and when they drew near the gate Hilda held out her hand to say good-bye.

"It is four o'clock—just tea-time. I am coming in to see your mother."

Hilda put her hand in her muff again, and went through the gate he opened for her. She did not press the self-invited guest to enter. When they got into the drawing-room Langridge was there before them, in the full enjoyment of tea and muffins. Hilda noticed at once that his flaring blue tie accorded ill with the large check suit he wore.

"What a colour you've got!" said Langridge admiringly, rushing to get a chair for her, and upsetting a small table on the way. "You look as fresh as a daisy after the ball. Doesn't she, Curwen?"

Captain Curwen replied with smooth politeness that Miss Clifford was looking charming. Hilda's colour became more brilliant than ever. She devoted herself entirely to Langridge after that, and did not speak to Captain Curwen for the rest of the afternoon. Langridge was

enchanted. She had seldom smiled upon him like this. He told her about the greenhouse he was building for her, and asked if she thought a bow-window would be an improvement to the drawing room.

Hilda entered into the plans with animation, and even went so far as to choose the colour for her boudoir furniture, which she had refused to consider before.

"Come over to the Abbey to-morrow—you and your mother," said Langridge, in the seventh heaven of delight. "I want your advice about the window. I think it should be on the south side."

Hilda graciously accepted the invitation, and Langridge promised to give them lunch.

"You come too, Curwen, old fellow," he added, giving the Captain a slap on the back that made him wince; "you are up to all sorts of dodges in the way of architecture, I know."

Hilda opened her lips to speak, but closed them again quickly.

"I shall be delighted," said the Captain pleasantly.

It was positively intolerable to Hilda that Captain Curwen should go over her future home with her. She knew his quiet smile of superiority so well. How he would look when Langridge said or did something more clumsy than usual!

"Whatever possessed you to ask him, Langridge?" she demanded crossly, as soon as the Captain had left the room.

"I thought he might be able to advise us about the bow window," replied Langridge, the exuberance of his spirits somewhat sobered by her tone. "He is having something of the sort done at Curwen Manor, and he might give us a wrinkle."

Hilda said no more, but Langridge understood that he was in disgrace, and departed much crestfallen.

But at the morrow's lunch she was brighter than ever, and made herself enchanting to both the men. She sat on Langridge's right hand and absorbed his whole attention as usual, but she was quite conscious that the dark eyes opposite her were regarding her quizzically.

She hated the whole thing.

They went over the Abbey after dinner, leaving Mrs. Clifford to slumber peacefully in an arm-chair. Hilda was graciousness itself, and praised the greenhouse and admired the bow window, and gave her orders for future alterations with the air of a little duchess. Langridge was more delighted than ever.

"To think that in three months' time you will be here for ever," he murmured rapturously in her ear, when Captain Curwen was looking out of the window. He accompanied the words with a pressure of the hand that meant volumes.

But the prospect of a mortal eternity spent at the Abbey, with Langridge for perpetual companion, made Hilda shiver.

"Are you cold, dear?" asked Langridge solicitously.

"Cold? No, I am burning hot," she answered, tearing her hand from his and showing him a fevered cheek. "Please don't worry me."

At this moment a servant came with a message for Langridge, which necessitated his leaving the room for a few minutes.

Captain Curwen and Hilda were left alone. The former was still looking out of the window.

"It is a fine view," he remarked at last, as if he saw the necessity of making conversation, "and some of the rooms here are really superb. It will be delightful to be the mistress of such a place."

"Yes," said Hilda faintly.

"You look very hot," said the Captain, regarding her in some surprise at her blazing cheeks.

Hilda rose suddenly.

"It is because I——" She had almost been on the point of saying that she had been irritated beyond endurance; and that she was more ashamed of her future position than proud of it.

"A little agitated, I dare say, by this visit to your future home," said the Captain coolly. "I hope that I may be a welcome visitor here?"

"I hope you will never, never come," said Hilda, with a burst of passion. "Certainly I shall never ask you."

Captain Curwen smiled a little under the small raven moustache that had concealed so many expressions in its time.

"May I ask why I have offended you so deeply?" he asked. "I do not think you can be so foolish as to dislike me because I tease you a little sometimes."

"I don't choose to explain my reasons to you. I shall be surprised if you come after what I have said."

"So shall I—very. You may be quite sure, my dear Hilda, that I shall never trouble you after you are married. Till then I shall consider this a burst of petulance, and continue to tease you as before."

Hilda had been quite sure that the Captain had lost every spark of feeling

that he had once had for her, but now, looking up into his eyes, she was surprised at a certain expression in them that belied the coldness of his words.

She went home in a thoughtful mood.

Next day she astonished her mother by saying that she should like to be married immediately.

"My dear Hilda, how very extraordinary you are! Married immediately, indeed. A man in Lord Langridge's position can't be married in a hole-in-the-corner sort of way like other people. He must be ridiculously in love to make such a suggestion as that. And the trousseau not even begun! It is out of the question, Langridge must be mad."

"It is not Langridge's idea. It is mine," said Hilda firmly.

"Then I call it more extraordinary still. Indeed, to be in such a hurry is hardly—hardly the thing, in fact. You will excuse my saying so, Hilda, but it is very unusual for the woman to hurry on the marriage."

"I don't care in the least whether it is usual or not."

"My dear, you must not be unreasonable. You cannot go and ask Lord Langridge to marry you at once. It is a shocking idea," said Mrs. Clifford, much ruffled. "Let me hear no more of it, Hilda, I beg."

Hilda relapsed into silence after this. She had done her best, and if things went wrong it would not be her fault.

Soon after this, Langridge departed on a three days' visit to London to see about the boudoir hangings, and order some jewellery for his future bride. Hilda said good-bye to him with a light heart. At least she should have three days of freedom.

On the second day at dusk the front-door bell rang, and Captain Curwen was ushered into the room where she was sitting. The afternoon had closed in, and the room was in twilight save for the ruddy flickering of the dancing fire.

"Mamma is out," said Hilda, giving her unwelcome guest two reluctant fingers.

"I think I will wait till she comes back, if you don't mind," he answered, sitting down with great composure. "I have a message to give her from my mother."

"Couldn't you leave it with me?" said Hilda, with a delicate suggestion in her manner that his visit was unwelcome.

"I am afraid not, thanks."

He sat back in his chair and watched her fixedly, perfectly aware that she was uneasy under the scrutiny.

"So Langridge is away?" he said at last.

"Langridge is away—yes," she answered. "Buying the diamonds for which you are selling yourself," said the Captain, with languid scorn. "I met him at the station before he went, poor chap!"

"How dare you speak to me like that!" cried Hilda, flashing angry eyes upon him. "I have borne with you long enough. I will not be insulted by you."

She rose to leave the room, but he got up also and barred her progress. They stood facing each other, and the firelight showed that both were very pale.

"Is the truth an insult?" he asked her sternly. "I have stood by and watched patiently hitherto, but now I want to save you from yourself. If Langridge were poor instead of rich, would you marry him still in three months' time?"

She dropped her eyes. "My affairs are nothing to you," she said haughtily. "Let me pass, please."

"Not for a minute. Sit down, Hilda."

Something in his voice terrified, while it subdued her. Mechanically she obeyed.

He surveyed her in silence for a moment. Then he spoke very quietly.

"I want you to choose between me and Langridge—now."

She looked up at him breathlessly.

"Choose between you?" she faltered.

"Yes, choose between us. I am not going to make love to you, Hilda. I did too much of that in the old days. But I came home from India determined to marry you if you were free."

"I am not free."

The words were spoken very low, but he heard them. He pointed scornfully to the diamonds on her hand.

"You are bound by that," he said steadily, "but it is a bond that is not unbreakable. Will you sever it?"

She did not answer, and he went on:

"There is less shame in breaking a tie like that, than in giving yourself body and soul for ever to a man you do not love."

"How do you know I do not love him?" she asked, raising her eyes defiantly.

He laughed derisively.

"Because you love me!" he answered.

"I do not."

He surveyed the defiant face again.

"Poor Langridge!" he said simply. "So he is to be sacrificed to your pride and ambition, is he? I consider that I never did him a truer turn than when I asked you to choose between us. To marry the woman you love is purgatory unless the woman loves you."

He made a step forward and held out his hand.

"But since you have made your choice, I will go. I only hope that your marriage will turn out better than I expect. Of course, it is needless to say that I consider Langridge is a very fortunate man."

She shuddered away from the outstretched hand and hid her face.

"What am I to do?" she moaned.

"Choose!" repeated the Captain, smiling at her.

She held out her hand without looking at him.

"Take it off!" she whispered.

He drew off the diamond ring and placed it on the table.

"Lift your eyes," he commanded, "so that I may see whether you love me—as I love you!"

But she kept them hidden, and he kissed their lids instead.

"What about poor Langridge?" she asked him later, when, blushing and happy, they sat hand in hand in the ruddy twilight.

"Langridge? Oh, he must build up his wall again!" said Captain Carwen, smiling.

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MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX.

"YOU deserve a holiday from ladies' committees, mother, you really do, and I am sure Dora ought to have a rest from card-sorting; besides, I, too, want a quiet time."

Thus spoke Forster Bethune when the season was at its last gasp.

"You have overworked yourself, dear Forster; we always said some such thing would happen. I wish your cabbies would give you a lift now and then. You never will take a carriage."

"Why should I? I have two legs and two arms. My cabbies would be glad enough to stretch their legs sometimes. Honestly I want a rest, though; at least, some doctor says so because he doesn't know what else to say."

"Oh, Forster! have you been to a doctor? And you never told me," said Mrs. Bethune, alarmed.

"No, I met Ellis Hope, and he prescribed without any of the usual fooling. I told him I had not been ill, and that the workmen never get rest, so why should I?"

"But, Forster, you are not a workman. I wish you would not always class yourself with those poor dear people."

"Dora, what do you say—am I not a workman?"

"I wish you would try to be idle for once. Mother, let's take a real holiday and do nothing," exclaimed Dora; but Adela interposed.

"Father says we can't afford it. Hinckman has thrown up a farm."

"We can do it very cheap, and I'll be mother's maid, and mademoiselle need not come back, so there will be her salary," said Dora, with her usual talent for settling the affairs of the family.

"But you can't leave mademoiselle in the lurch," said Forster quickly. "That is against all rules of employers."

"Oh, Forster, I didn't mean that, of course; but she does want to go home. She has had some money left her. She must come and pay us a long visit when she has forgotten my sins."

"I had better go out as a mother's help," said Adela, smiling, "if poverty is the order of the day. I should not like to be really poor, nor would you, Forster, if the reality came close to us."

"Why not? I think I could live at our club for a week on exactly the same money that our fellows live on," said Forster, laughing.

His mother looked horror-struck.

"Forster, you must remember, they have not the same—how shall I say?—inside organisation as you have."

"Not such a strong one, you mean, having had to live on all sorts and conditions of scraps. Now, if all the wealth of England were distributed more evenly—"

"I'm sure Lady Dunlop proved that that would be useless," said Mrs. Bethune, trying to remember some arguments. "I think the shoeblacks would not get more than a farthing each; no, it wasn't that, but it was something."

"Well, it was something to the shoeblacks' advantage, I suppose," said Forster; "but about Switzerland. If father takes Mary home, they will both be happy. He

can stay in his library, and she in her study with the fiddle, and we will go and ape the rich."

"Forster! How delightful! Adela and I, you and mother. How very joy—I mean how too delicious," cried Dora, collecting a bundle of invitation cards and throwing them into a paper basket. "No more parties to go to, and Aunt Mary won't look severe because it is quite fashionable to rough it in Switzerland; Archbishops and Dukes do it."

"But really, Forster, I can't leave your father. No, I must be at home; you three shall go."

"You must come, mother, because the girls will want a chaperon, I suppose. Adela will meet so many of her young men, and Dora will be wild. I want to organise a kind of Cook's tour for my club men."

"Oh! that's the reason of Switzerland," said Dora, a little disconcerted. "I was surprised at your suggesting anything nice without a motive. It's very tiresome always to think of other people, isn't it, mother?"

"You will not have that poor dear Mr. Gillbanks to help you. By the way, Forster, he really has married the Princess. I couldn't believe it when you told me, but I saw it in some paper. Where was it, Dora?"

"I kept it for Forster to see. The Princess lost her brother, so it was all very quiet; but Mr. Gillbanks might have asked you, Forster."

Forster took the paper and read the announcement.

"I had a note from Philip written on the eve of his wedding," he said, hardly glancing at the paper.

"I wish the Princess had not married Mr. Gillbanks. I hear it said everywhere that it was for his money," remarked Adela slowly. "I met Mrs. Todd the other day, and she says quite openly that Miss Winskell only came to London to find a rich husband. She did not look worldly, did she, mother?"

"She was a beautiful woman, and she belonged to such a really old family; it is a pity she married for money."

"A pity she married Philip Gillbanks!" exclaimed Forster, his eyes flashing a little. "Yes, it is; he is a hundred times too good for her."

"He is very nice, certainly, and your friend, Forster; but of course his father is a——"

"An honest tradesman, and his son is a thorough gentleman. Miss Winskell is a very beautiful woman with no heart."

"Do you think so?" said Adela thoughtfully. "She seems to me to have a splendid character. There was nothing small about her. How little gossip touched her! It could not find any fault with her. You liked her, didn't you, mother?"

"Yes, dear, I thought her quite charming, and I thought you agreed with me, Forster?"

"I really thought at one time that she was in love with you, Forster," said Dora, with the downright truthfulness of youth; "but if she married for money, that explains it. I shall never marry for money; because, if I did, you would want it all for your good works, Forster. You are always getting Jack's money."

"It would only be for 'the right distribution,'" said Adela; "but you must not talk of marrying, Dora, you are much too young."

"Our family seems so unlike other families, that I thought I had better do something natural. Anyhow, my husband will have to look after all of you," answered Dora, laughing.

The simplicity of the Bethunes made them always perfectly open with each other. In this consisted their originality; but this time, at least, Forster did not disclose his own affairs. He was trying to reconcile Penelope's wedding with his thought of her as the ideal woman, and he could not do it. Something in her face made him still believe, when he looked back on their strange interview, that he might have won her if—if—he had been rich. Then at times he felt angry with Philip for being so easily taken in, and so easily persuaded that he was Penelope's true choice. He wanted to get away from London, and he wanted to drive away the thought of the might-have-been. Before, this love had never touched him closely; now he felt that it had laid its hand upon him, and its power had but increased when he knew that the Princess was not for him, but for his friend. He was sorely puzzled at the break-down of his belief in Penelope's nobility. To marry for money seemed to Forster a sin of the deepest dye, one which must sully the soul of a woman, even more than so-called blacker sin could do. His own disappointment was less than the loss of his belief in the only woman who had called forth his power of

love. He had answered Philip's note with one equally short; merely wishing him happiness, if it were to be found, and ignorant of the fact that Philip was taking his bride abroad. He himself wished to get away; but to go off alone and wander aimlessly and selfishly was not possible to him — hence his suggestion, which had been received with such delight by Dora, if not by the other two ladies.

So, struggling against a fearful feeling of apathy, Forster began preparations, and began also to try to organise a party of young East End men to start with him. Mrs. Bethune was rather horrified when she was told that she was to form part of a Cook's personally conducted tour, but after having expressed her conviction that of course it was all right if Forster did it, and that the poor dear young men would enjoy it immensely, she was partially reassured by hearing that she should travel in a first-class carriage, alone with her daughters, though Forster was going with his friends. Mr. Bethune and Mary both hastened to their country home, with a feeling that the rest of the family had strange ideas of pleasure, but that, on the whole, it was safer to allow them to go their own way, for fear of hearing remarks on their peculiar hobbies.

Mary suddenly developed an idea of joining a village orchestra, which, as her mother remarked, would be charming if she could keep her choir in tune. Mr. Bethune was also delighted to be leaving town, because a rich neighbour having died in his absence, his library was to be sold. The neighbour had many first editions, and Mr. Bethune was torn between the conflicting emotions of proper respect and feeling for the dead, and of delight at the chance of buying his coveted books.

Adela was now full of plans for Forster's men, and she made nine housewives and nine bags for the party. Forster engaged a whole carriage, five on each side being the correct number, and he wished to travel as they did and to allow himself no privileges.

The meeting at Charing Cross was a sight which Mrs. Bethune never forgot. The nine young men appeared, headed by Forster, whose handsome and aristocratic appearance no simplicity could efface. The weighing of the luggage was not difficult, and there was no extra charge for it, though Mrs. Bethune's huge trunk made her feel quite ashamed of her needs. Forster had asked Lord and Lady Rook-

wood to come and see them start, and they duly arrived, more from pity and curiosity than from any wish to give the "gutter folk a taste for travel," as Lord Rookwood expressed it; all the while secretly admiring his cousin's extraordinary courage.

"Jack, this is nice of you," said Forster, brightening up as he caught sight of his cousin and his wife. "You know you are helping us to have this treat, so you ought to see us start. My mother is in her carriage with the girls. Do go and speak to her, and then, perhaps, you wouldn't mind running out to that fruit-shop at the corner and buying us each a peach. I thought perhaps you would have brought us some of your Richmond peaches."

"Really, Forster, we didn't exactly connect our peaches and your party," said Lord Rookwood, trying not to allow the sarcasm to be too audible in his voice.

"Well, that was a pity! Anyhow, you can get some good ones outside, if you choose them carefully. Come along, Smith, we must get a carriage to ourselves, as we are ten."

"I don't think any one will intrude on the ten of you," muttered Jack, going off to see about the peaches, whilst his wife hastily went to look for Mrs. Bethune, feeling relieved to find her at last in a first-class carriage.

"Isn't this delightful, cousin Emily?" cried Dora. "Forster has been so melancholy of late, and this will cheer him up."

"Will it? Well, I hope it will. They will be a little warm. Auntie, dear, don't let Forster speak to you on the way, or they will call you Mrs. Cook."

"I am so glad the poor dear men should enjoy themselves, but if only Forster would come with us! Adela has made nine little bags for the party, haven't you, dear?"

"Ah! how kind of you, Adela," said Lady Rookwood, wondering what the bags were to contain. "I wish I could have helped you. Where are you going?"

"Oh, to a nice idle place," said Adela. "It is called Vidars, and mother can enjoy the views, whilst Forster's party makes expeditions, and Dora and I can sketch. Quite 'bourgeois,' you see, Emily."

"We are going to Scotland, and shall meet all the people we have already met in town. There is something to be said for your bill of fare."

Lady Rookwood always managed to find something nice to say. Her good breeding

came in usefully, even when she most disapproved of the Bethune eccentricities.

"If you meet the Princess, give her our love, and tell her she might have invited us to her wedding," said Dora.

"Oh, the Princess! Yes. Is it really true she has married Mr. Gillbanks? Jack was surprised, for Lord Arthur was supposed to be very much 'épris'—but then Mr. Gillbanks is very rich, isn't he?"

"Yes, I believe so; at least, Forster always had enough money for his club from Mr. Gillbanks, but he thinks he is too good for the Princess."

"Oh, well, that is a friend's view! Oh, here is Jack, and where are the peaches?"

Lord Rookwood was seen coming quickly along the platform, trying to appear as if he were in no way connected with a lad who walked behind him, carrying a large dish of peaches. Forster turned towards his cousin, his face all smiles.

"That is kind, really, Jack. Let me introduce you to my right hand, Tom Smith, Lord Rookwood—see what he has brought us. We are beginning in grand style, but after this we are going to do everything cheap, you know, Jack. This is only the first rocket of our humble fireworks."

Lord Rookwood backed out of view of the party as soon as politeness allowed, and drew Forster with him.

"Why don't you go with your mother in a sensible manner, Forster?"

"But I am going with her. Don't pity us, we shall do very well. It will be a nice change for me."

"A nice change! Good heavens! Well, I'm off to the moors. Emily is going to fill the house with people."

"Then I reserve my pity for you. I find all this society business very distasteful."

"We saw more of you this season, however. Do you know it was reported that you were going to marry the fair Princess, but Gillbanks ran away with the Jubilee bun."

Forster winced a little.

"Yes, Philip Gillbanks has married Miss Winskell."

"A mere affair of money, I hear."

"I don't know."

"Well, don't forget that a wife makes a difference, and leave Gillbanks alone. A man's not worth his salt after he's married. I tell Em that. You must go, I see the guard coming. If I thought he would believe me, I would warn him that he has

a lunatic with him. If you meet the Princess, give her my respects."

"She is at home, I believe. The father met with an accident. I say, Jack, why don't you join us?"

"Make the eleventh! No, thank you. Good-bye."

ROUND LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

IN winter or summer, in shine or in shower, the prudent pedestrian will avoid Lincoln's Inn Fields. Nowhere does the wind blow more keenly, or the sun strike with more scorching power. And in crossing that vast area there is often neither shade nor shelter to be found. And yet in making a bee line from west to east, or vice-versa, by court and alley, slum and shady street, say between Piccadilly Circus and St. Bride's, you are pretty sure to come out in Lincoln's Inn Fields. There is a practicable direct and easy way, indeed, alike for vehicles and foot-passengers, where from Leicester Fields, the old-fashioned Cranbourn Street, dimly recalling the once famous alley and its fops, is continued in Long Acre, for centuries the abode of coach-builders, and so, with a slight dislocation at Old Drury, by the more modern Great Queen Street right into the Fields, and leaves you planted there to find your best way out, or to risk a sun-stroke at one time, or a soaking at another, by venturing across the dreary waste.

All the more tantalising is it on a hot summer's day to see enclosed by grim iron railings in the centre of the "Fields" a pleasant, shady oasis, with trees and turf, which would make an agreeable short cut to the gate of Lincoln's Inn, but from which the public is rigorously excluded. Five acres or more of pleasant garden, in the very heart of "London-beyond-the-walls," and for the most part of the day an utter solitude; here surely is something that might be altered for the better. Indeed a good many attempts have been made to secure the site as a public garden, open to all who pass that way, but hitherto without success; and a bill promoted by the County Council will be introduced in the ensuing session of Parliament to make a public garden of the place, with the proviso that no noisy games shall there be played. For there is a somewhat natural dread on the part of the lawyers who occupy the stiff and solemn-looking houses about the Fields lest all the turmoil of

a noisy, crowded, slummy neighbourhood should be brought into these quiet precincts by the attraction of such a pleasure-ground.

The Benchers of Lincoln's Inn have no such fears, but then they are almost out of earshot. There will be no "wigs on the green" in defence of the threatened seclusion of the Fields. It is the wigless branch of the profession whose opposition is dreaded—the great family lawyers who there do congregate; the silent, unseen rulers of the rulers of the land, who, in their safes and deed-boxes, hold the title deeds of half England and the secrets of the great families whose fortunes are attached thereto. The shade of Talking-horn still haunts these not Elysian fields; the interests of the Dedlock family are still his anxious care.

From the quiet and deadly dulness of the Fields it is but a step to a widely different scene. Through Portsmouth Place, where lawyers' chambers suddenly give place to lodging-houses at popular prices, and where a knot of fierce-looking women are holding spirituous discourse, it is but a step to a narrow paved court, once called Bear Yard. There was, doubtless, a bear-pit close by in Shakespeare's days, and the yard was a tennis court and then a theatre, "Little Lincoln's Inn Theatre"; but it is all spick and span now, red brick and smart railings and ground glass windows. It is the casual ward of the Strand Work-house; and never in the palmiest days of the Bear Yard stage did it boast of fuller houses. Soon after one p.m. people begin to arrive, and form a queue under the shelter of a covered alley. Draggled, haggard women, some with children in their arms, crouch on the steps; while the men, in every variety of tattered garments and without a sound boot among them, fold themselves up as tightly as they can so as to offer the least possible surface to the searching wind.

Beyond the yard is a Board-School, its narrow playground just now swarming with small children wrapped up in all kinds of faded garments, but generally well shod, and as lively and noisy as they can be. They are the children of costerland, the nippers of whom we hear in the music halls, and the sharpest and most active little fry anywhere to be met with. And it is these nippers who are mostly concerned in the opening of Lincoln's Inn Fields, and whose irruption, like the Huns among the polished civilisation of the Empire, is dreaded by the grave and

reverend Signiors of the law. Then there are the general inhabitants of the country lying between Covent Garden and the Fields, the bulk of whom are connected with the market, or dependent on it in some way or other. The region is one that is packed as tight as it can hold, and that in the dingiest and queerest of courts and alleys, where all kinds of queer industries are carried on.

Here is a man outside his door, with a great earthen vessel that would have held the captain of the Forty Thieves, and is full of potatoes of a size and elegance of shape that would win a prize at any cottagers' show. These potatoes he is carefully washing and polishing one by one. "The best o' fruit and the best o' cooking is what you get at the Royal York Potato Cans," and truly the potato in perfection is to be tasted only at the street corners.

Further on, where a wider street breaks the line of alleys, you may see a grizzled coster running his pony up and down and trying to effect a sale to a younger member of the fraternity, whose lady, adorned with a tall hat and ostrich feather, seems equally interested in the bargain, while a friend with a long whip smartens up the pony's action. The whole street shares in the excitement of the deal, and every door shows a knot of women in deshabelle who seem vitally interested in the matter. At the next corner you may meet a group of flower girls, with empty baskets to bear witness to a good day's trade, but not too tired to exchange a little playful badinage with friends and neighbours. Hard at work in a little shop with its front knocked out, are half-a-dozen women and girls making chip baskets for the coming strawberry season; a reminder of spring even in the very lap of winter. And in an adjoining driftway are packed a battery of empty barrows, waiting to be hired by adventurous traders, whose working capital does not "run to" a private vehicle of that description.

Altogether it is a pleasant and varied region, this coster-land, although dingy enough, and sometimes bordering on the disreputable; but its limits are soon reached, and presently we are in Sardinia Street, which is, as it were, the Regent Street of the locality, with the Sardinia Chapel on one side, which has long ceased to have any connection with the Sardinian Embassy from which it derives its name, but is now the chief Roman Catholic church in the neigh-

bourhood. The chapel, it will be remembered, was gutted and partly burnt, together with the Ambassador's residence in the Fields, at the very beginning of the Gordon riots in 1780. The Embassy and chapel had been since 1648, at which date the buildings on this, the west side of the Fields were first erected. And a gloomy archway that seems almost crushed by the weight of the ponderous houses above it brings us again into the Fields.

There is a quaint and ponderous dignity about this side of the Fields, and our interest in the buildings is enhanced by the suggestion that our excellent Welsh architect, Inigo Jones, who designed Whitehall Palace and Aberglaslyn Bridge, is also the author of these grandiose mansions, once occupied by great nobles, or high dignitaries of the law. But the grand mansion at the upper corner of the Fields, where Great Queen Street enters—the foot-way carried beneath the end of the house, in a tunnel of brick and masonry—this fine old house, with the double flight of steps to its imposing entrance, and the grassy courtyard and rusty iron railings, is of somewhat later date, and was built by the Marquis of Powis, a devoted adherent of James the Second, shortly before the fall of that monarch. In after days it belonged to the Duke of Newcastle, Prime Minister under Farmer George's reign, and you can fancy the crowds that struggled up or down the stairs as the Minister gave his grand receptions, or at night the glare of the torches, the cries of link-boys, the struggles of footmen and chairmen and powdered coachmen, where now is the silence of the grave.

But at night the Fields, though the resort of the finest company, were not the safest place in the world, even for those with coaches and lacqueys. To this we have the testimony of Ralph Wilson, an eminent highwayman who might have been an eminent lawyer, had his gifts turned that way, for he had been articled to Mr. Dixon, of Lincoln's Inn, a very eminent and honest practitioner in Chancery. But instead of poring over law books, Ralph took to evil company, and presently, with Jack Hawkins and another, well mounted and armed, astonished the town with daring robberies at people's very doors. "One night in August, 1720," writes Wilson, "when all mankind were turned thieves"—he alludes to the South Sea Bubble and the general scramble for wealth—"we robb'd a coach against the dead wall in Chancery

Lane, another the same night in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in going off we stumbled upon my lord Westmorland, with three footmen behind his coach; we robb'd his lordship, but with a great deal of difficulty, for the watch poured upon us from all parts. Yet at the fire of a Pistol over their heads they retired as fast, and gave us an opportunity of getting clear."

We can fancy the panic among the honest Dogberrys, but it must be remembered that they were mostly amateurs at the business, and that their lives were probably not insured for the benefit of their families. Nevertheless they had the chance without going out of the parish, for at the "Bell and Dragon," at Lincoln's Inn Back gate, according to a prospectus of 1704, for seven shillings and sixpence down you might insure five hundred pounds at death, being far better terms than are offered nowadays, but subject to the realisation of a whip of half-a-crown a head, to which all subscribers were liable on the death of a brother member.

The Fields were at that time a wild open space, where booths and huts were run up, and mountebanks practised and charlatans held forth. There was the oratory of preacher Henley, who brought round him by his eloquence all the butchers of New-port Market:

Preacher at once and Zany of thy age,

as Pope describes him, while in another passage where the poet parodies Milton's grand lines:

High on a gorgeous throne that far outshone
Henley's gilt tub. . . .

he is justified by the fact that the pulpit of the preacher was draped with gold lace and crimson velvet, while the special liturgy was of a very ornate description. The poet gives us another glimpse of the Fields in describing the rivalry of the playhouses:

Dire is the conflict, dismal is the din,
Here shouts all Drury, there all Lincoln's Inn.

For at the time he wrote all the world, gentle and simple, were pouring into the Fields to struggle for places at Rich's Theatre, where Gay's "Beggars' Opera," with all its pleasant license and abandon, was electrifying the town.

But of this theatre, the old "Duke's" Theatre, and one of the two "patents" now represented by Covent Garden, not a trace remains. Its site is covered by the back part of the College of Surgeons, which rears its handsome front

on the south side of the Fields. It does not add much to the gaiety of the scene, especially since the students, who were formerly examined in its halls, have been relegated to the new establishment on the Embankment. Nor has its museum any particular local interest—unless the skeleton of Jonathan Wilde should suggest associations with past worthies of the locality, or the bones of the Irish giant recall the unscrupulous methods of the great John Hunter in getting possession of favourite subjects.

Of a more cheerful character is the museum of Sir John Soane on the other side of the way, where if you are lucky enough to hit upon the right day you will enjoy the sight of the finest "Hogarth's" extant, and of a really beautiful collection of curios of all kinds, and bring away the impression that you have been the guest of a courtly professional man of the early century, in his house as he lived three-quarters of a century ago. His dinner-parties, indeed, must have been feasts of the Barmecides, for the kitchen is the cell of a monk, the wine-cellar a classic mausoleum, and all Egypt is crammed into the "coals"; where you would expect the china cupboard is a niche devoted to Shakespeare, and in every hole and corner is something curious, intaglios, gems, rare missals, illuminated manuscripts. The only regret is that the courteous host is debarred from speech by the conditions of ghost-land, and can give no description of his treasures.

But we have not yet quite done with that jealously guarded enclosure that represents for us the freedom and sometimes riot of old Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was there, you will remember, that the scaffold was erected for Lord William Russell's execution, and people have often queried, why should they have brought the poor man all the way from the Tower just to have his head chopped off? But they forget that just over the way, on the other side of Holborn, then a rural scene, was Bedford House, the great mansion of the Russells, and that probably from the upper windows of the house could be seen the dreadful apparatus of death, and even the dull thud of the axe be heard by those who listened. So that the execution in this spot was, in fact, a threat, or a warning to the powerful Earls of Bedford—the compliments of Stuart to Russell.

The delusion that we are still among the fields in reality, is strengthened by the

tortuous approaches to the region. The courts and alleys we have traversed show the lines of footpaths; in yonder corner there was a gap in the hedge, the hedge over which, in Aggas's map of Elizabeth's time, a solitary cow is peering. Later, when hemmed in by houses, this was called the Devil's gap, and there is a story of a murder there by or of an old miser in the time of the Commonwealth, of which trustworthy accounts are wanting. And behind the north side of the square there is a curious region called Whetstone Park.

There is something symbolic in the Whetstone and derivative in the "Park," for though now a quiet industrial region given up mostly to workshops and stores, it seems to have been once a dangerous and rather disreputable quarter. And yet it seems that John Milton lived here in 1647, with a view over the fields at the back of the house. And the Turnstiles, Great and Little, which to this day, unaltered in name at least, give access to the Fields from Holborn, were doubtless real wooden turnabouts, that permitted two-legged creatures to pass while keeping the animals that grazed on the fields in proper custody.

And now the circuit of the Fields brings us to the old Inn of Chancery that gives its name to the region, and that itself owes its designation to having once been the Inn or habitation of the De Lacey, Earls of Lincoln, the last of whom died in the days of the Plantagenets. But Lincoln's Inn has a history of its own which is not to be smuggled in at the far-end of a paper.

EXAGGERATION.

Is there any responsible person who is willing to "back" himself to converse freely with his fellows for twelve continuous hours without allowing his tongue once to stray from the straight and narrow path of perfect accuracy? I wonder! Man is born to exaggeration as the sparks fly upwards. I remember provoking a friend to considerable wrath by persisting in asserting that, in this respect, he was probably like other men. He was a Scotchman, a precisian, a man who prided himself on being scrupulous in all things. He would have it that there was no difference between exaggerating and lying, that to say he exaggerated was equivalent to saying he lied; and that I should think him capable of saying the thing that was not pained him not a little. In

such a matter he would not concede that there could be such things as trifles; truth was truth, and lies were lies, whether they were big or little ones.

I gave way to him at the time—he was so very sure!—but on one or two subsequent occasions, on which I met him, I made a mental note of some of the remarks he made, and one night I brought them up against him, and routed him. I asked him why he had not come by a certain train from town. He answered, in that grave way of his, as if he were measuring his words: “I meant to, but I just missed it by a second.” I had him on the hip. I asked, when I confronted him with his own statement, how he knew that he had missed it exactly by a second. He reflected, and then allowed that he had missed it by perhaps a minute; the train must have been leaving the platform when he entered the station. He had been guilty of a very common form of exaggeration, what may be called exaggerated accuracy. Again, he was unfortunate in his lodgings. To be accurate, his landlady was not a perfect cook—she made him suffer. He was telling us that, on one occasion, she had been particularly trying. “The whole dinner,” he said, “was completely spoiled.” I brought this also up against him on the momentous occasion on which I was convicting him by the evidence of his own mouth. I wanted to know how he knew that the whole dinner was completely spoiled. Was there no portion of it, for instance, which was only slightly spoiled, not any portion of the meat, not any portion of the vegetables, not any portion of the rice pudding? Indeed, I wanted to know how he knew that any portion of it was completely spoiled. I showed him, in his own dictionary, that to spoil meant to render useless. Was he prepared to assert that his landlady had rendered one portion of that food which she had prepared for him wholly and absolutely useless? He looked at me askance. A peculiar gleam came into his eyes. He had fallen again. Still once more. He was a vehement politician. He was very fond of declaring that a prominent politician on the wrong side had “nothing” in him. When I enquired, mildly, if he did not consider it a monstrous exaggeration to say, of any man, that he had nothing in him—for the meaning of the word, *vide* as before, the dictionary—he began to use language of the most exaggerated kind towards me.

But I do not remember to have heard him afterwards claim to be, at least in this respect, not as other men are.

If exaggeration were proscribed, and the proscriber had power to enforce his own proscription, a large number of people would, practically, be debarred from ever opening their mouths to speak. Exaggeration, in a certain class, is born of ignorance. Not long ago I heard some Brighton excursionists assuring each other that, next to London, Brighton was the largest town in England. It was an exaggeration born of ignorance. I have heard Brightonians themselves assert that Brighton is the finest town in England—we must many of us have heard similar statements made by inhabitants of other third, fourth, and even fifth-rate places. I recollect a Deal boatman—who had never been farther inland than Canterbury, and on that occasion, unless I err, his visit had been paid to Canterbury gaol—sententiously informing me that, taking it all in all, there weren’t no place equal to Deal, not nowhere. All such statements are, surely, merely exaggerations, born of something very much like ignorance.

“I reckon there ain’t anywhere a lad like our Jim.” I heard an old countryman say that only a day or two ago, and he meant it. Under what form of exaggeration would that come? “If you want tattles you try Mr. Bates’s; there never were such tattles as his.” Under what form that? “My dear, you will never get anything done half as nicely as you get it done at home.” Who among us has not heard some such remark as that? Is that the exaggeration which is born of ignorance too?

The exaggeration which is born of ignorance is, indeed, not confined to any particular class—it is universal. There is a lady who said, “I dare say we walked fourteen miles.” She showed what she dared to say when she said it, because as a matter of fact they had walked, perhaps, seven. The simple explanation is that she is no judge of distances, and that the seven had really seemed to her to be fourteen. Ignorance of the meaning of figures is wider spread. Another lady was crossing a field in which there were a colony of rooks. “I should think,” she said, “that there were thousands.” There were possibly, over a hundred, but it was all the same. A man I know walked over Dartmoor. He was saying that Princetown prison is cold because it is placed so high.

Some one asked him how high it was. "Ob, I suppose over three thousand feet." I hardly think that Princetown stands on such an elevation as that. Few persons can measure a height with their eyes. I stood with three others at the foot of one of the mounds which are to be found on the top of a famous tunnel. We each of us wrote down on a separate slip of paper how high we thought it was. The difference between those four estimates was startling. I do not, to this day, know how high that mound is; but at least three of us must have been egregiously wrong.

Some persons are so constituted that they can scarcely open their mouths without allowing exaggerations to escape from them. There is, for instance, the impulsive person who is addicted to the use of superlatives. "That is the nicest girl I ever met," says Jones of, perhaps, half-a-dozen different girls in the course of a single week. In the same way he assures his friends that each new book he happens to chance upon is either the "worst" or the "best" he ever read. In this respect Miss Gusher is even worse than Jones. Where he is satisfied with one superlative she insists on half-a-dozen. Jones is a dancing man. He says of each fresh dance he honours with his presence, "My dear fellow, it was the nicest dance I was ever at." But listen to Miss Gusher!

"My dear Maud, I am quite sure the Crashers' was, without any exaggeration, the very nicest dance I was ever at, the very nicest! And there were the sweetest men—one in particular. He was the loveliest man I ever saw! And such a dancer—he was the best dancer I ever danced with! I never danced with any one whose step went so perfectly with mine! And then there was another—in fact, there were several—indeed, I should think there were quite half-a-dozen of the very best dancers I ever saw! And there was the most perfect floor! And the loveliest supper! Were you at the Bulstrodes' the week before? You ought to have been! I don't think I ever enjoyed myself so much in my life, I'm quite sure I didn't! There were the most charming men! And the finest dancers! By the way, were you at the Palmers'? Wasn't it exquisite! Did you ever see finer dancers? I never did!"

And Miss Gusher goes through a list of perhaps twenty or thirty dances, protesting that, in each and every detail, each was the "very best" she was ever at. She is

not at all conscious how odd her remarks would look if they confronted her in black and white.

I sometimes ask myself of how many words the average English-speaking person's vocabulary consists. The number must be very limited. Nothing else can explain the fact that so many people have what may be called "stock phrases." The use which they make of these stock phrases is but another form of exaggeration.

Some time ago I "sat under" a clergyman who was addicted, in his sermons, to the use of the phrase, "most vital question." Some would think that there could be but one "most vital question." He thought otherwise. According to him the phrase was a sort of compound noun of multitude. He would touch upon half-a-dozen different topics, each of which was apt to be a "most vital question." In fact, I doubt if he often touched upon a topic which was not a "most vital question." That, by showing an almost cynical disregard for the just value and meaning of words, he might be showing his congregation an example of what looked very like wilful exaggeration, was, I feel sure, a reflection which never occurred to him.

If you were to tell Major Pikestaff that he habitually exaggerates, I am inclined to think that there would be something approximating to an argument. And yet I do not believe that I exaggerate when I say that possibly a hundred times a day the gallant Major declares that something or other is a "most extraordinary thing." "Most extraordinary thing—just met Porter on the pier." "Most extraordinary thing—last night I had no trumps two hands running." "Most extraordinary thing—our cat has kittens." I do not know how many "most extraordinary things" Pikestaff imagines that this world contains, but I do know that he never suspects that he exaggerates.

Nor do I think that Miss Mawle has a notion that she exaggerates when she speaks of so many things being a "perfect providence." "It was a perfect providence that we fixed the treat for Tuesday." "It was a perfect providence that I was in when Mrs. Trueman called." "It was a perfect providence that I brought my purse." Have you observed how anxious Mr. and Mrs. Roper are that their children should speak correctly? They are down upon the least exaggeration. The other day Tommy Roper was describing a cricket

match, in which, according to him, he had played a prominent part, describing it, I am bound to say, in somewhat flowery language. His father struck in, "Don't exaggerate, my boy, don't exaggerate, stick to the literal truth!" He turned to his wife. "I wish I could induce that boy to remember that there is not much difference between an exaggeration and a lie." And then almost immediately after, Clara Roper, at thirteen, began to tell us about one of the girls at her school. If she is anything like the portrait Clara painted of her she certainly must be a remarkable young woman, and not by any means a nice one. So her mother seemed to think; because this is what she said: "My dear Clara, are you quite sure of what you say? Do be careful! Before you exaggerate I wish you would consider what mischief you may do."

Of course, the Ropers are right. It is to be wished that all parents were equally careful in checking any tendency towards exaggeration which their children may evince. It is painful to see how many children do exaggerate. And it is such a dreadful thing, especially in the young. In the old we do not notice it so much. Though some observations made both by Mr. and Mrs. Roper, when Tommy and Clara were not present, struck me, judged by their own standard, as being rather odd.

It was at dinner. Soup was served. Mr. Roper took a spoonful.

"I see, Mrs. Roper, that your cook wishes to poison me again. This isn't soup."

"My dear, it's only a little too salt."

"A little too salt! I should think she's put all the salt in the parish into it. It's nothing but salt."

Mrs. Roper turned to me, when the servant had taken the tureen out of the room.

"What trials servants are! There are no good servants nowadays, absolutely none. As for a good cook—there isn't such a thing."

I feel that it is, perhaps, a little unfortunate that Mr. and Mrs. Roper are not, in their turn, possessed of parents willing and able to correct any slight exaggerations of which they may be guilty.

Exaggeration is a good deal a question of mood. In some moods we exaggerate more than in others. It is, probably, no exaggeration to say that every man exaggerates when he loses his temper; and, at least, equally may this be said of every

woman. Hawkins is, in his normal condition, a capital fellow; careful of speech, slow to wound another person's feelings. But he is the more or less proud owner of a temper. If there were such a thing as a Lost Property Office for Tempers, on six days out of seven one might confidently reckon on finding Hawkins's temper there. It is seldom in its owner's keeping; and when it is not in its owner's keeping he scarcely ever speaks without resorting to exaggeration. Everything is, on those occasions, against him. All is for the worst in this worst of all possible worlds. The clerks in his office are made to feel this particularly. If one of them omits to dot an "i," he is made to feel that he has been guilty of a crime which, regarded from the most merciful point of view, is equal to murder. Of the appalling weight of testimony which his wife and children could give of the husband's, and the father's, capacity for exaggeration one is afraid to think.

Again, who does not know how Mrs. Griffin can exaggerate—and she does exaggerate when her temper is lost, stolen, or strayed. And do you remember what things Miss Ayh and Miss Bee said of each other when they, as it were, fell out upon the way? In what exaggerations they indulged! And when those two charming sisters, Clara and Emily Roper, quarrel—as they do, perhaps twice or thrice a day—what shocking exaggerations they permit themselves to use!

Dyspepsia lends itself to exaggeration just as much as the good digestion which waits on appetite. The pessimist, like the optimist, has a natural bend towards exaggeration. The world contains both good and evil. If you average it up you will find that it is essentially a world of semi-tones, of compromise. The pessimist, who sees nothing in it but bad, exaggerates in about the same degree as the optimist, who sees in it nothing but good. He who is starving can see nothing but suffering, crime, misery. He who has dined well, and whose digestion is as good as his dinner, is apt to be certain that life is a perpetual feast.

Faddists are the masters of the Ignoble Art of Exaggeration. If one wishes to avoid exaggeration, one is careful to measure one's speech; one is never in extremes. Faddists seldom measure their speech; they are almost invariably in extremes. Teetotalers; anti-smokers; anti-vaccinators; anti-everythings; vegeta-

rians; the people who would "put down" fiction, the rational enjoyments of the Sunday, theatres, dancing, cards, billiards, so many of the things which make life worth the living; if these people did not exaggerate, they would for ever hold their peace. Unfortunately, exaggeration is too often their only weapon. The clear, dry light of truth is not for them. They could not live in such an atmosphere for an hour. It would be well if our weak-kneed brethren could be brought to understand what a plain and certain fact this is. It might bring peace and comfort to their minds.

"In medio tutissimus ibis"—the middle path is the path of safety. That used to be a sentence in the Latin grammar which we used at school. The saying is true enough. Be moderate; avoid extremes; adapt your habits to your constitution. Live your own life; be master of your own life. Above all, do not make a trade of exaggeration. Exaggerate neither with the teetotalers nor with the drunkards; "in medio tutissimus ibis"—you will go safest in the middle. You will certainly walk nearest to the truth.

The more attentively one considers the subject, the more clearly one perceives how almost universally prevalent is the vice of exaggeration. One supposes it is a vice. There are the clerics at one end, and the politicians at the other. The clerics of all the creeds. There is the Mohammedan, who tells you that if you do not do certain things certain other dreadful things will happen. There is the Buddhist, who assures you of the paramount and, indeed, vital necessity which exists why you should do certain altogether different and entirely incompatible things. And the same positive, and, in truth, superlative assertions, meet one nearer home. The religious atmosphere, all the world over, is too apt to be crowded with exaggerations. One seldom enters a place of worship, belonging to any one of our nine hundred and ninety-nine different sects, without hearing at least—well, say one exaggeration, uttered by the parson in the pulpit. This may seem a dreadful thing to say. But though 'tis true, 'tis pity, pity 'tis 'tis true.

We get on to safer ground when we approach the politicians. Every one recognises that there is exaggeration among them. We all of us have Radical friends who will be the first to allow that the Tories habitually deal in what it would be courtesy to call exaggerations; while that the Radicals are, of their nature, compelled

to exaggerate, none will be readier to admit than the Tories. If, on the other hand, you go to a third person, an individual who cries a plague on both their houses, you will find him prepared to concede that both parties—all sides—exaggerate alike. And, possibly, that third person will not be so far out as he might be. One is almost forced to the painful conclusion that faddists, clerics, and politicians make what may be called a trade of exaggeration.

And who remains? There is exaggeration in the professions. Take medicine. Is not an exaggeration of knowledge part of the stock-in-trade of the average medical man? The less he knows, the more he exaggerates his knowledge. He may not say in so many words that he knows, but he desires to impress you with the belief that he does. Is not that of the very essence of exaggeration? Few things are more difficult to diagnose than the ailments of little children. The child itself cannot say what is the matter with it. Very often those in charge of it cannot clearly explain. Constantly that walking encyclopædia—and a very useful encyclopædia he is; I am not underrating his usefulness one jot—the general practitioner, has no more notion what is the matter with the babe he is called in to attend than the man in the moon. But it would be unprofessional to confess his ignorance. On the contrary, he exaggerates his knowledge—not only what it actually is, but what it, by any possibility, could be. He assumes an air almost of omniscience. He looks wise. He hums and has. He prescribes a powder. He changes the medicine the next day, and again the day after. He peddles and palters. The child recovers, or it dies. In the one case he exaggerates his responsibility for the child's recovery, which he very easily can do, since, for the result, he is wholly and entirely irresponsible. In the case of the child's death I wonder of what exaggeration he is guilty in the certificate he gives?

Where would the man of law be, if he were confined to the strict letter of the truth? If he were not, occasionally, allowed to deviate into the byways of exaggeration, would he not cease from off the face of the earth? How many of us would patronise the lawyer, and still more the barrister, who was sworn, at all times and at all costs, to his clients to tell and to suggest the truth, and nothing but the truth? If it were not taken for granted that solicitors and counsel will exaggerate,

within limits—wide limits sometimes!—and to the best of their ability in the interests of their clients, litigation would be no more.

If exaggeration is rampant in the professions, it is not because it is non-existent in the trades. Very much the other way. Look at the advertisement sheets, and see. If you believe what you read there, every tradesman is offering the best value for money. Not one of them ever offers anything else. Every man Jack of them offers you a genuine bargain. Beginning with Cutter, who offers you a suit of clothes, with an extra pair of trousers, "given away," for one guinea—marvellous value; and ending with Snip, who, if he wants five, or even ten guineas, for his suit of clothes, does so because for style, finish, and quality they are simply unsurpassable. Indeed, considering what they are, Snip has no hesitation in affirming that they are the best value for money that ever yet was offered. Exaggeration is the very life of modern commerce. It is the atmosphere in which it lives, moves, and has its being. Whether the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, ever was told by tradesmen and commercial men, may be a matter of doubt. They certainly do not allow any considerations of accuracy to fetter them to-day. The other day I was in a village post office, in which is carried on the business of a general shop. An old lady was purchasing a rasher of bacon. Of the assistant who was serving her she made enquiries as to its quality. Said that assistant, "I never put my knife into a better piece of bacon in my life." Quite so; no doubt. That assistant was up-to-date. Only yesterday I was at a famous tailor's. I wanted to know what was the wearing capacity of some cloth which they were showing me. Said the shopman, "You never saw anything wear like it in your life, sir." It was only a figure of speech, but that gorgeous shopman was own brother to the village assistant.

In an age of competition, exaggeration is inevitable. It is one of the results of the struggle for life. We live fast, we speak fast. If we wish to be accurate, we must weigh our words; that would necessitate our living slowly. More, judged by the standard of the time, it would necessitate our being dull. Exact meanings require exact expression. It is surprising what a number of words we should have to use if we were always to say, or to try to say,

exactly what we mean. With all our efforts, we should sometimes fail. We must exaggerate, not necessarily always or even often, but certainly sometimes, if we wish to talk at all.

And since this is so—and if you doubt that it is so, I should like to live with you for a month, and take down every word you say or write "*literatim et verbatim*," I would give you, out of your own mouth, the ocular proof—it is just as well to bear in mind that it is more than doubtful if exaggeration is, in any sense, improper; not to speak of its being a crime; that is, exaggeration of a certain sort. A lie is a lie, and if your intent is to deceive, whether you do so by means of exaggeration or of a lie direct, your position is the same. You have tampered with the truth; let us hope that you have not also, and at the same time, proved yourself to be a scamp. Though, mind you, there are lies which merit the cross of honour. Possibly, one of these days the present writer may have an opportunity of proving to you that that is certainly no lie.

But in exaggeration of a certain sort there is no intent to deceive. It is a fashion of speech—no less, no more. This is an illusive age; an age of phrases; almost a stenographic age. A few words convey, and are intended to convey, a large meaning. Verbal accuracy is all very well for grammarians, and, for the matter of that, for laymen. But it by no means follows that a scant appreciation of the sense and authority of words is necessarily a sin. Would you tell that clerical friend of mine that by the constant reiteration of that favourite phrase of his, "most vital question," he offends? Against good taste, morality, what? For my part, I am doubtful if he offends against anything. He is a scholar. He knows, if any man does, that there can only be one "most vital question." He knows that what that question is has taken all the wit of all the ages to determine, and that we are still, some of us, in doubt. He is aware that, at any rate, this much is certain, that ninety-nine and a considerable fraction per cent. of the subjects which he so glibly sums up for his congregation under the common heading, "most vital question," are very far indeed from being anything of the sort. The simple fact is that when he says that such and such a topic is a "most vital question," he means that it is a question of more or less importance. He merely conveys his mean-

ing in a peculiar, and one might almost say, characteristic form of words. He himself knows what he means, and those who hear him also know what he means. Just as I knew what the tailor's shopman meant when he said, of the piece of cloth, "you never saw anything wear like it in your life, sir." He meant that it was a good article, and that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, it would wear well. He merely expressed what he meant in a formula of his own.

Literal verbal accuracy is, practically, impossible. We may be accurate when we deal with figures, because figures are themselves so many formulas. But words are pretty well what we choose to consider them. When we say that two and two make four, no one may impugn our accuracy. But, probably, no man ever yet described a woman's face without convincing somebody that he had exaggerated in some particular. When Miss Gusher describes the dances which she so much enjoys in that flowery way of hers, it is at least open to doubt if she herself is conscious of her own exaggeration. Her desire is to give expression to her feelings. It is at least conceivable that her feelings are so amazingly strong, that, even by constantly resorting to superlatives, she is only able to give inadequate expression to them after all.

The precisian who makes up, or who endeavours to make up his mind, that so far as he is himself concerned, he will never fall into the sin of exaggeration, wastes his time. To begin with, if he does not exaggerate in his own opinion—he probably has a very high opinion of himself, or the poor fallible creature would scarcely endeavour, by means of a resolution, to declare his own infallibility—he is certain to do so in the opinion of others. So much depends upon the point of view. Take this, by way of illustration.

Mrs. Barnes (at dinner): Mary and I saw a dreadful thing to-day. We saw a cab run away, and it almost ran into a 'bus.

Mr. Barnes: Was anybody killed?

Mrs. B.: Fortunately, no. But there might have been dozens. It was a frightful thing. It gave me quite a shock. I have not got over it yet.

Mr. B.: My dear, you exaggerate.

Mrs. B.: John! what do you mean?

Mr. B.: You don't mean that you saw a dreadful thing. You mean that you saw a

cab run away, and that it might have been a dreadful thing, that's all.

Mrs. King (Mrs. B.'s mother): My dear John, I don't like to hear you talk in that cynical way. I assure you that it was indeed a terrible spectacle. The frightened horse dragging the—

Mr. B. (suggestively): Frantic cab?

Mrs. K.: No, John, not frantic cab. I don't exaggerate—dragging the cab along that crowded thoroughfare; people shrieking, drivers shouting, lives imperilled, property endangered. Emily is quite right—it was a most dreadful thing to witness.

Charlie (Mr. B.'s brother): My dear people, nothing nowadays is dreadful unless there are at least a hundred people killed.

Mrs. B.: Charlie! Who is exaggerating now?

That is the question which they are left discussing—who is, or rather, who was.

As has been said, the foregoing is merely an illustration of how much depends upon the point of view. We may take it for granted that neither of the ladies had any wish to indulge in the use of exaggerated language. Their experience of catastrophes was limited. What seemed to them a dreadful thing, seemed to the gentlemen an everyday occurrence. The moral of which is, that you will find that the person of the largest and most varied experience, of the most extensive knowledge of men and of affairs, and of the most scholarly attainments, is, as a rule, the person who is least likely to be led into the highways and byways of exaggeration.

A SUNBEAM.

THE wet winds are sighing, the rain patters down,
The sere leaves are drifting, the low heavens frown,
The oak logs are crumbling to red fervent heat,
The dull night is closing—I want you, my sweet.

Oh soft arms that clasped me, oh red lips that
kissed!

Oh sweet voice that called me through sorrow's grey
mist!

Oh little hands holding, oh golden curls tossed,
Oh dear "ways" that won me from all I had lost!

Oh big tears in bright showers, oh smiles that
flashed after,

Oh great brown eyes lighting to quick happy laughter,
Oh sudden caresses, oh wee glancing feet,
Oh sunbeam in sadness!—I want you, my sweet.

THE ZERMATT VALLEY IN WINTER.

ON the ninth of January I had seen a notice in the recreation room of the Montreux Kursaal to the effect that the

"Monte Rosa Hotel" in Zermatt would remain open throughout the winter. This set me thinking. Even the wagers of franc pieces on the little horses which constitute the gambling attraction of this Kursaal could not distract me from my notion. The limit here is one franc. That does not lead to ruin, except by a very long and sinuous path.

Again, in my hotel I ran against a Briton who by chance had years ago found his way to Zermatt in February. He described it as a grand experience, though he did not seem to like the discomfort of an hotel quite unprepared for him, in which he had to tarry cold until fires were lit to thaw him. But that was years ago; and the winter was, he admitted, a severe one. The walk from Visp plunged him repeatedly into snow to the thigh, and he was done up when he came under the lee of the Matterhorn.

This winter of grace 1893-4, on the other hand, seemed exceedingly mild all over Switzerland. I had climbed a few thousand feet above Montreux, and found comparatively little snow, though a delightful keen air in contrast to the mildness down by the lakeside. In short, I could not resist the temptation to speed up the Rhone valley. If the Fates were kind, I would walk from Visp to Zermatt, get up to the Gorner Grat or some such accessible point of view from the valley, perhaps get over the Théodule Pass into Italy, and at least find my way on to the Simplon. Walking tours in Switzerland in winter are not fashionable. It is hardly to be wondered at. But, methought, with exceptionally little snow on the ground, the pleasures of such a tour might put those of a summer tour in the shade on more counts than one.

The next evening found me at Visp, after a tedious long journey in the train. At least it would have been tedious as well as long, but for the sights it afforded. The weather was astonishing: so hot that the natives were to be seen lounging about by gates and near the station precincts just as if it had been August. A bright sun was on us till it was time for it to get behind the snow-peaks. These were delightful to see. The snow was melted from the huge rocky banks to the valley on the north side; but on the south side there was enough of it to give bold colour to the scene. Rhone, in the middle of the valley, ran blue and shallow in its stony bed.

At St. Moritz I came across a brace of Englahmen and two of my countrywomen,

also bound for Zermatt. This looked well for the "Monte Rosa Hotel." I believe last winter was the first in which the hotel was opened for the cold season, and barely a dozen people came to it, thereby entailing loss on the Seilers. Things certainly seemed to promise better for the second winter.

But soon after St. Moritz the short day closed in. There was gloom indescribable over the gorge of the Trient when we passed its northern extremity, and the steps to the Fall—much reduced—looked like toy steps in the faint light. Overhead, the snow-peaks held the red flush of sunset for a while. Then we had the stars and a slip of a young moon—and nothing more determinate for external illumination. The night closed in bright and keen, and the Swiss railway guards stirred up the train's fires so that we travellers were half cooked in the hot steam with which they considerably flooded us.

Visp and the "Hôtel des Alpes" were reached something after the dinner hour. The hotel porter snatched at my baggage as if he feared I might change my mind and postpone staying here until the summer. But though no visitor was in the hotel and none expected, my welcome was of the warmest, and in less than half an hour a meal was ready for me that belied the apologies the landlord wasted upon it. Whosoever finds himself at Visp and the "Hôtel des Alpes" may be recommended to clamour for some of its stewed prunes. The prunes are of the valley, and finer and better-flavoured fruit I never tasted.

A cigar and another bottle of Fendant and my feet to the stove made the rest of the evening pass pleasantly. Then a good night in a large bleak room, with two or three degrees of frost in it, made me ready for the morning.

I was called at six—which seems early in January. But it was not a minute too soon for my programme. The excellent landlord had breakfast ready by half-past six, and at seven I put my head into the nipping outer air, knapsack-girdled, and rejoiced in the stillness, the beauty of the starlight, and the glow of the snow of the Balfrinhorn towards which I set my face.

"It is better here than in London—like this," said my landlord—he had spent a memorable year or two in our metropolis, for his "English's" sake, and had brought back to Rhone Valley a lively remembrance of our fogs.

I agreed with him and set out. The air caught me at the ears and set me tingling. But it was so good to breathe.

When I got into Visp's dark, slippery streets a church bell began to tinkle. It sounded well in the silence. The dim forms of schoolboys also asserted themselves, with their satchels in their hands. Education at seven fifteen a.m. seemed an impossible thing. But it is in their energy for self-improvement—in mind and purse—that only too many of our Continental friends are beating us hollow.

I have enjoyed many delightful hours afoot on this little globe of ours, but none to compare with these early ones on this day. To begin with, there was the pageant of sunrise—carried through before my eyes to the smallest detail. I saw the stars pale, and the blue of the zenith grow more solid; and then the glorious rose flush of day took the topmost peak of the Balfrinhorn before me, and the Bietschhorn in the rear. It was long indeed before the sunlight grew commonplace, and by then I had other things to see.

The road was in capital trim. I even stirred dust on it, so that I was surprised to see the midsummer look of my boots when full day was declared. The Visp, down in its bed to the right, babbled frolics among its reaches of ice, with thin snow on the ice. The sloping vineyards had had their snow melted into them, but the frost had bound their soil into the hardness of pottery. High up the multitudes of little red-brown chalets caught the eye, and made one wonder how their denizens reached them. And the waterfalls that in summer make this valley walk so tumultuous were all frozen rigid. In places they had solidified across the road (which as roads go, is a poor one), and the treading was dainty. But upon the whole, what with the bracing air, the coolness, the absence of wind, and the cloudless blue overhead, as well as the easy walking, the conditions for a walk were unrivalled.

In an hour and a half I was at Stalden, and that in spite of a halt at the picturesque old bridge a mile north of it, with its little chapel—sadly scored with the initials of summer tourists—and central shrine to boot.

There was some snow just here in the village, and I might have done better to take to the railway line for a few miles. Of course trains do not run here in the winter—though if all winters were like this

year's they probably would soon begin. But the line in the lower parts was as free from snow as the road at its best.

The villagers of Stalden were mostly assembled round a wheel just achieved by a wheelwright, and which seemed to be provoking much praise. But I distracted them a bit. They were evidently unused to the sight of a knapsacked tourist in January. Their swart houses contrasted well with the drifts of snow close adjacent.

From Stalden to St. Niklaus exacted two hours. The total distance from Visp to St. Niklaus seems to be ten miles, with an ascent of about sixteen hundred feet. The comparatively short time the walk took me is a proof of the excellent conditions under which I made it.

No part of the road looked more impressive than from above the deep gorge of the Visp, an hour or so past Stalden. The veining of the frozen waterfalls in the sides of the gorge, was particularly fine, and the sunlight on the tops of the mountains. It was a pity the sun could not get at the valley itself. Only at rare intervals did I tread into a patch of its radiance.

There was a fair amount of snow in the pine-woods on the east side of the valley just past Kalpetran. But I would not have had it otherwise in spite of its slipperiness: the green of the pines went so well with it, and the rocky boulders among the tree-trunks, with their touches of golden or olive lichens.

All the same, I was glad when St. Niklaus's onion-shaped, silver-gilt church-tower appeared in sight, and I could think with hope of the downright déjeuner I had earned.

Here I was in the sunlight, and the sloppy snow told of its power. I was not surprised to hear that the glass showed but one degree above freezing-point, even in the shade.

The large hotel was, of course, shuttered up, but Rovina's café-restaurant, they told me, could feed me. Rovina and his wife were indeed only too glad of the commission. Nor were they to blame if the half duck they served me was grievously undercooked, so that I was fain to make my meal mostly from the sundries. Meanwhile a St. Niklaus cobbler was reinvesting my boots with nails. I should have felt tolerably secure on the Matterhorn itself, even in winter, with the pointed lumps of iron with which he duly studded me.

I am half ashamed to say I dallied two hours at St. Niklaus: eating, and drinking,

and smoking. Methought if I had already covered nearly half the distance to Zermatt in three and a half hours, I might reckon seven or so for the whole journey, in spite of Herr Baedeker's mention of nine hours for it. But at length I took on my knapsack again.

After St. Niklaus it seemed to me that the waterfalls and curtains of icicles which draped the valley sides took more decisively the varied tints of the same ice in Norway in winter: amber, green, pale blue, and the rest. Of course it may well be so; though it depends more upon the colouring matter in the soil through which the water descends than upon anything else.

I had now the noble Weisshorn and his companion peaks to absorb me. Soon, too, the Breithorn with Matterhorn junior hove in view—speckless masses of snow. I was more than ever convinced that winter is the time for touring in Switzerland. Nothing could have been finer than the Weisshorn's pointed summit, with the blue of the nether glacier contrasting with its whiteness. And I was inconvenienced neither by a roasting sun, nor the dust stirred by my own boots and those of other pedestrians, let alone carts; nor did the scream of trains evoke unhallowed echoes from the precipitous brown rocks on either hand.

There was here just enough snow to sledge on. They were cutting timber in the woods high up to the left, and shooting the logs riverwards in places. Save for this excitement all was still. I had one lively moment, however, when the trunk of a pine-tree, some ten feet long by one in diameter, came crashing down with terrific impetus from the hillside, and made a huge dent in the road only a couple of yards before me, where it touched ere bounding into the Visp far below. It was a genuinely narrow escape. They do not thus imperil the lives of tourists in summer.

At Randa I halted to take coffee in the house of a sick Italian. The afternoon was closing up with an uncertain look that I did not like. A veil of greyish mist gripped the high peaks, without wholly hiding them. The sun had gone, and the cold came on keen. I made all haste on to Zermatt, therefore. If snow was in the air, the sooner I was housed the better.

So through Tasch, with its reaches of the frozen Visp on which I could have skated, but for the snow. And at length I turned with the road and saw the Matterhorn in front, looking like a sheeted giant. The

twenty-two mile walk was at an end. So far, well. The morrow might take care of itself.

It was just here—practically in the village—that a couple of sledges caught me up. They bore my compatriots of St. Moritz. If they felt half as cold as they looked, and I looked half as warm as I was, they must have doubted if they had followed the better way of gaining their haven. Probably they had spent scarcely less time on the road than myself.

I did not stay at the "Monte Rosa" after all. The "Gorner Grat Hotel" was also open, and its two feminine attendant spirits intercepted me. I could hardly have done better for myself. Much kindness have I met with at the hands of homely innkeepers in different parts of the world; but seldom as much as here. I felt extremely well at ease as I sat with my feet in hot water and listened to the chatter of the hotel *Fräulein*, a girl of but eighteen or so, who has achieved peaks with as little effort as members of the Alpine Club.

There was another reason why I was glad to be where I was. A dark-browed man was drinking wine in a room, and the landlady whispered to me that he was a smuggler. She could not tell whether he purposed that night to make the attempt to pass into Italy, or the next night or the next. But it was his *métier* to do this sort of thing when the weather conditions seemed favourable. If I seriously thought of forcing the *Théodule* and so getting to Breuil, the smuggler was a guide ready to my hand.

But these poor fellows—who take heavy weights of tobacco and mouth-organs on their backs for comparatively small profit, apart from the risks of snow and customs' officers—had quite recently had a bad shock. On New Year's day one of them had been killed by an avalanche up by the Schwarzsee Hotel. It was an avalanche of his own shifting, but that made no odds to his fate; and, instead of getting across the frontier, he had to be carried down to Zermatt, where he lies in the churchyard.

The moon was almost too new to make these adventures desirable, however, and I did not come to terms with "*monsieur le contrabandiste*." Ere dinner was ready I had opportunity of judging of the moon. The night cleared gloriously, and Jupiter and young Madame Luna lit up the Matterhorn to perfection. A fox's barking and nothing else broke the stillness of the

valley and the village, as I leaned on the railings and enjoyed the fair scene.

After dinner, I arranged with one of the Lauber lads to be specially conducted in the morning to the Gorner Grat. Of course, in summer, no one would think of a guide for this festive standpoint, where people almost have to take their turns for a view. But the Grat stands some ten thousand three hundred feet above sea level or five thousand feet above Zermatt itself, and with about a foot of snow in Zermatt it was conjecturable that there were several feet up there, with the need of step-cutting in places. Moreover, there was to be a toboggan down the winding path of the hill which leads to the "Riffelalp Hotel," and the sledge to carry to the hill-top.

Again I was favoured. The morning was perfect, and when we started into Zermatt's streets the pink flush of day was on the Matterhorn, a sight for gods as well as men. There is very little demand for guides here at this time of the year, and young Lauber, I doubt not, excited some envy. But he bore himself well in the midst of his comrades as we passed them by. We had an ice-axe apiece. More luggage seemed unnecessary, of course excepting the luncheon, which was arranged at my guide's back so that his body's heat might interfere with its congelation.

Work could not have been more pleasurable than ours, as we zigzagged up through the woods in the fine keen air, with the Matterhorn and his neighbours clear to their smallest details whenever we chose to turn and look at them. Perhaps it was a little dismal to see the various refreshment huts "en route," so tightly shut and barred with snow. For it was thirsty work as well as enjoyable. But it would scarcely have been better to see them in the full fervour of their custom, as in the dog days.

We were barely two hours in getting to the green-shuttered "Hotel Riffelalp" from the river-side. No house could have looked more bleak and yet bright in mid-winter; for the sun broke upon it while we sat on its steps, and the wind from Monte Rosa curled round against us from the Gorner glacier.

The snow, here, was deep and scarcely trodden. A dog ran out from one of the caretakers' huts and greeted us with yelps and grotesque curvetings in the snow—into which, at times, he almost disappeared.

From the "Hotel Riffelalp" we climbed to

the higher hotel—eight thousand four hundred and thirty feet up—through more and more snow. We had to go cautiously in the steeper places, as a bad slip might well have established a young avalanche, in the middle of which, or even on the top, it would have been at least uncomfortable to travel down to the level.

On the stone terrace of this hotel also we rested for a minute or two, facing the Matterhorn, which seemed absurdly near, and with the splendid range of peaks from the Dent Blanche to the Weisshorn wholly and minutely exposed to us. The sun was here almost oppressive. It melted the snow on this side of the hotel, and the Breithorn was visibly smoking under it. The only clouds against the blue were the innocent strips of transparent cirrhi which resulted from this melting process near the Breithorn's summit. They hung towards the Matterhorn like bannerets. But the Matterhorn studiously declined to be veiled—would, in short, have none of them.

It was tiresome scrambling up the remaining two thousand feet. One moment we were in snow almost to the middle, and the next stumbling over iced rocks. The wind, too, was as keen as the sun was hot. I felt the latter burning through my neck's epidermis. But we were encouraged by the ever-increasing beauty of Monte Rosa in front, with the Lyskamm and the Twins. Castor and Pollux especially looked most alluring—like a couple of gigantic sugar-loaves. They also smoked under the sun, though less heartily than the Breithorn, which looked the simple mountain it is—in summer. Once across the Gorner glacier, whose blue ice was hid by snow, it seemed we might have clambered up the Breithorn in an hour. But, of course, the depths of its snows had to be taken into account. Probably the attempt would have been fatal to the pair of us with or without ropes.

The Grat hut at last. It was exceedingly welcome, though locked and with all the litter of the last autumn's last debauch of bottles visible through its windows.

I prefer not to say anything about the view we enjoyed. It could not have been more impressive and more uncompromising. The white Alps far and near lifted their heads towards a sky that was never bluer, even on the hottest of midsummer days. Young Lauber, like many of his fellow professionals, is rather a taciturn lad. But he had a brief burst of gladness in the

prospect, ere he opened his satchel for the bread and meat.

In spite of all, our victuals were frozen somewhat annoyingly. The bread in particular was a test to the teeth. But no matter. There was no doubting our appetites, and I believe we would have tackled the Zermatt slices, though they had been as hard as granite. As for our Fendant, it needed no ice to make it extort praise—at all events from me.

We lunched with our backs to the breeze, eyeing the Matterhorn; and long ere we had finished my feet were itching to be off. It was not to their taste, all this snow. But pipes had to be lit ere the downward movement was begun, which promised to be almost too easy.

It was not that, for the Grat's ice-clad rocks had to be taken as carefully in descending as in ascending. But it was the better of the two experiences.

Our subsequent glissade through the Rifflalp woods was a bone-trying business, not without risks. Had there been a uniform covering of snow it would have been different. As it was, my back would rather have made the descent twice over in the ordinary way.

Ere returning to the hotel, we deviated to the Gorner gorge through snow deep enough for anything. Here was a change with a vengeance from its summer presentment. The river ran under ice for the most part, scores of feet down in the rocky channel, which in the hot days it fills almost to the gallery. But it was worth seeing in the snow, with the Matterhorn filling the space at its head that the pines and rocks on either hand left unoccupied. Nor was there anything to pay for the spectacle. The Zermatt worthies who guard its entrances and its exits in summer were not here now.

This seen, we made for the hotel. The day was near its close. The Matterhorn's background had paled, and there were signs of stars.

If my landlady and her daughter had been kind the previous evening, they were kinder still now. The tales they told me of Zermatt doings will long stay in my mind.

The next morning—Sunday—I again put on my knapsack, and, reluctantly enough, turned my back to the Matterhorn. The odd thing was that though methought I walked my best, the return twenty-two miles took me a longer time than the walk uphill the other way. I suppose the greater

heat had something to do with it. This afternoon the glass was two or three degrees above freezing point in St. Niklaus. Be that as it may, and though I saved a mile or two by the railway, it was dark ere I got back to Visp.

A more notable three days' tramp I have not had anywhere. Davos must look to itself. With such winters as the last one, Zermatt is bound to become as popular a winter resort, nearly, as it is in summer.

TIT FOR TAT.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"YOU are a flirt!"

"I am not!"

"It is rude to contradict."

"It is worse than rude to assert what isn't true. It is libellous."

"And don't you know that the greater the truth the worse the libel? Therefore, to say that you are a flirt is libellous because it is true."

"Well, I don't care if I am; so there."

"I never supposed you would care. I believe you are utterly incapable of caring for anybody or anything except yourself," he said coolly.

"You didn't think so always."

"No; one has to learn wisdom by experience unfortunately."

"Why 'unfortunately'?" she asked quickly.

"Because the process of disillusionment is a painful one, and takes up a lot of time that might be more profitably employed."

"And you regard the time that you have been learning to know me—all the time that we have been engaged, in short—as time wasted?"

"Unquestionably."

"Then—we will waste no more," and she raised her blue eyes to his, a scornful light in them. "You are free, and I—"

"No, no; don't act impulsively, or you may regret it afterwards," he said soothingly, in the tone in which he would have addressed a passionate child.

"I am free, too"—she paid no attention to his interruption—"free to flirt as much as ever I like."

"And no doubt you'll do it—not that our engagement has been any hindrance,

so far as I can see," he spoke with some bitterness.

"No, it has been a help rather," with a mocking little laugh. "You looked so angry that the temptation to go on was irresistible. It won't be half such fun now," regretfully.

"No, for I shan't care."

"Shan't you? Not ever such a little bit?"

"Not a scrap. I shall flirt too, and enjoy myself."

"Haven't you been enjoying yourself hitherto?"

"Oh, immensely. Watching you making eyes at all the other fellows, and longing to flirt myself with that pretty little Miss Robinson."

"Then—why didn't you?"

"Because I'm an old-fashioned sort of fellow, I suppose, and don't hold with flirting with one woman while I am engaged to another."

"Well—that is over," and she drew a long breath. "You need have no scruples now."

"No."

And then there was a pause.

They were standing together in the beautiful, rose-scented old garden of the Manor House, and the clear morning sunshine fell full on the girl's lovely flushed face, and wavy golden hair; and on the man's erect figure, and firmly cut, somewhat stern features, with their look of cool indifference and self-control. The old house rose behind them, a grey pile of building seen indistinctly through intervening trees; and before them lay a wide expanse of sun-lit meadow-land, where cattle grazed amid the golden buttercups, and skylarks sang joyously as they soared upwards to their glorious lord, the sun. It was a fair scene and a peaceful; but though the girl's eyes were fixed upon it, she saw nothing of its beauty, felt nothing of its dreamy charm. The man beside her occupied her whole attention; her changed relations to him filled all her thoughts.

"It will be very awkward," she broke out petulantly. "I wish this had happened yesterday."

"And why, if I may ask?"

"Then I could have gone home to-morrow as I had intended, but now——"

"You will have to make up your mind to spend nearly another week beneath the same roof as the man with whom you had intended to pass your whole life," he said

quietly. "Poor little girl, it is hard on you."

"Then—you are going to remain, too?" and she turned her wondering eyes full upon him.

"Of course," and he smiled slightly.

"As a soldier, I should be ashamed to run away, and, besides, you forget that Miss Robinson is here."

"I warn you that you will find her very stupid."

"Thank you. I know that she is extremely pretty."

"And we shall have to tell everybody, and there will be a talk and a fuss," she went on discontentedly.

"Well, that won't hurt us."

"No; but it is such bad form."

"Of course it is," he assented; "but I don't see that we can help that now."

"Need we say anything about it—just yet, I mean?"

"You can please yourself about that; I shall not mention that our engagement is broken off if you don't; but——"

"Yes!" as he paused impressively.

"As it is broken off, I intend to amuse myself. You would have no right to complain of that in any case, as it is what you have been doing yourself all along."

"I don't care," defiantly. "We shall know that we are nothing to each other, but we won't tell the world so for another six days."

"Exactly. But, of course, you won't expect me to be dancing attendance upon you all the time. I'll do what is necessary to keep up appearances, since you wish it, but——"

"I wish it! What do you mean?"

"Why, if you don't want to tell the world, I suppose you don't want the world to guess? For myself, I am absolutely indifferent on the subject."

"I see what you mean—yes, we had better keep up appearances."

"But beyond that we are of course absolutely indifferent to each other."

"Oh, of course!" impatiently. "Dance attendance upon whom you like, flirt with whom you please. It is nothing to me, and less than nothing."

"Thank you," he said gravely. "Is there anything more to be said, I wonder? Oh, yes; that badge of slavery I gave you, Trix—I beg your pardon, I should have said Miss Rainham."

"It doesn't matter," hastily. "We must keep up appearances, you know."

"Yes, but not when we are alone. That

ring, Miss Rainham, that you have done me the honour of wearing as a sign of our engagement——"

"Yes, I will give it back to you at once."

"No, no; don't pull it off—yet. Better keep it till you leave this place," he replied. "Don't you see it is still necessary that you should wear it to deceive the world, though we shall know that it means nothing?"

"But, Tom—Captain Despard, I mean—how shall I return it to you?"

"You can give it back to me when we part. Are you tired?" he added abruptly.

"No; why do you ask?"

"I thought you might be, as we seem to have been standing here a most unconscionable time, and——" he glanced in a casual sort of way down the path to where a slight, girlish figure could be discerned amongst the rose-bushes.

"And Miss Robinson has just come out to gather roses? I see," said Trix, following the direction of his eyes, and flushing hotly. "No wonder you are in such haste to get rid of me."

"Not at all. I am in no hurry for a few minutes, but as I see young Marchmont and some of the other men are going to the tennis-ground——"

"It is too hot to play. I am going into the house."

"As you please. Then I may consider myself dismissed?"

"You must; and I am only sorry I have taken up so much of your valuable time," and she turned away.

"Oh, never mind that. You have taught me a useful lesson, so the time has not been altogether wasted."

"And that is?" pausing and looking back over her shoulder.

"Never to take a woman seriously."

She laughed a scornful little laugh, and left him.

He stood looking after her for a moment, then strode off down the path, and joined the pretty dark-haired girl among the roses.

Little Miss Robinson looked up with a smile as he approached.

"Well?" she said anxiously.

"Yes," he replied, taking her basket from her. "I am quite free to help you now."

"And—do you think it wise?"

"Very wise; the wisest thing I have ever done."

"I hope—oh, I do hope—you will prove right."

"Time alone can show, but anything must be better than——" he broke off abruptly. "Come, there are heaps of roses still to be gathered. I will tell you all about it while you are getting them."

She was a long time getting them.

Trix, glancing from her window half an hour later, saw the two figures still lingering amongst the roses; and she laughed and sang a gay little song to herself as she ran lightly downstairs to join the tennis-players. The morning was certainly no cooler than it had been half an hour ago, but Trix had changed her mind apparently, and no one that day played more indefatigably than she, or seemed in such high spirits.

Yes, it was very pleasant to be free—free as air; and to feel that no one had a right to watch her with jealous, miserable eyes, or reproach her if she chanced—as not infrequently happened—to make herself too agreeable to her companion for the moment, or dance too often with the same partner. These things had chafed her often, she remembered, during the period of her brief engagement to Captain Despard; she wondered now how she had ever tolerated his interference for six long weeks, and smiled a little scornfully at the thought of her own exemplary behaviour. Whether an impartial observer would have pronounced her behaviour so irreproachable as to merit that scorn is another matter.

Yes; she was free now: and—so was he! That was the only drawback to her satisfaction.

CHAPTER II.

"How pretty Trix Rainham looks to-night!" exclaimed a lively young matron to her partner, in the pause between two dances.

"Yes; and how desperately she is flirting! I wonder Despard stands it. I wouldn't, if she belonged to me."

"Oh, he has no right to be censorious, for he is just as bad himself. He does it more quietly, I grant you, but there is nothing else to choose between them. Just look at him now with Fay Robinson! This is the fourth time he has danced with her already, and the evening is not half over yet. I wonder Trix stands it, if you come to that."

"I shouldn't have thought Despard was a flirting sort. He never seemed to have eyes

for any other girl than Miss Rainham a week ago."

"A week? A couple of days, rather! Well, all that is changed now, and he seems supremely indifferent to her flirtations."

"And she to his."

"Oh—I suppose so."

"Do you doubt it?"

"I haven't said so."

"No, but you implied it. Yet she seems enjoying herself immensely."

"Especially when he is in the room. Oh, she is having a very good time undoubtedly, and she wants everybody to know it."

"Well, there's no harm in that."

"Not the least."

"I suppose you think——" but she interrupted him quickly.

"Oh, no, I don't; I never think; it takes too much out of me. I see my partner bearing down upon us, so you must come to what conclusions you please about Trix and her fiancé. I know I should come to a very prompt conclusion if I were she; and so would my engagement."

"Take care; she will hear you," he cried warningly; but the warning came too late.

Trix, had they only known it, had heard the words distinctly; but they were not altogether unexpected, and nothing but her sudden flush betrayed that she had done so. Even the shrewd young matron was left in doubt on the subject, a doubt that her own wishes soon converted into a reassuring certainty, and she easily convinced herself that the girl's heightened colour could only have been due to the exertion of dancing, or some too flattering remark of her partner's.

"I think this is our dance, Trix!"

The girl turned quickly at the well-known voice, and her blue eyes flashed as she said:

"I had no idea we were so far down the programme as that. Are you sure you are not mistaken?"

"Quite sure; and"—lowering his voice a little—"I really think you had better give me this dance—for the sake of appearances, you know."

"Oh, appearances!" scornfully; yet she took his arm, and moved away. "Much you care for appearances."

"I never professed to do so," coolly.

"But out of respect to your wishes——"

"You accord me a duty-dance? Thank you. I'm quite willing to let you off it."

"No, no; we'd better go through with it now."

But after a few turns she asked him breathlessly to stop; she was tired, she said, and wanted to rest, and——

"Very well, we will sit it out, then," he said. "Shall we make for the stairs? There are a good many exhausted couples there already."

"No; it is so hot in the house. Can we not go for a turn on the terrace? It is stifling here."

"As you please," resignedly. "Perhaps it will throw dust more effectually in the eyes of the world."

She made a movement of impatience. "It is rather late to think of that now," she said, as they passed through the open window on to the wide terrace that ran before the whole length of the house.

"Indeed! And why?"

"After your conduct to-night every one must suspect——"

"Pardon me, my conduct can have no interest for you. I no longer presume to criticise yours, and you must be good enough to let mine alone."

"But don't you see that people will talk?"

"Of course, but what of that? They always do."

"Remarks are being made already. Your marked flirtation with that Miss Robinson is——"

"My own affair, and hers, Miss Rainham."

"Oh, you are welcome to amuse yourself," she cried passionately.

"Thank you. I fully intend to."

"But you might surely do it without making a laughing-stock of me."

"I think you exaggerate a little," he replied. "But in any case we are quits on that score. I no longer reproach you, and you are quite free to indulge in as many marked flirtations as you please, so far as I am concerned. What more can I say?"

Nothing, truly; and it is probable he might have said less, and yet have given her more satisfaction. The ways of women are wonderful, and past finding out; and Trix was herself at a loss to understand why her flirtations had suddenly lost all flavour, and ceased to interest her, because they no longer excited the jealous wrath of her sometime lover. She paced along beside him for a few moments in silence, and he saw that her face was very pale; far paler than could be accounted for by the soft summer moonlight.

"I fear you are tired," he said, and there was polite concern in his tone, as though he were addressing the merest chance acquaintance, but nothing more. "Shall we return to the house?"

"Oh—presently. Miss Robinson can wait a few minutes."

"I am not engaged to her for the next two dances; so if you like to take a turn round the garden——"

"Don't you find her very stupid—after me, you know?"

"On the contrary, she is a most charming companion."

"Really! Why, she has absolutely nothing to say."

"I have not discovered it, yet I have seen a good deal of her the last few days. At least, whatever she does say, she means."

Trix made a little grimace.

"What a very uninteresting person she must be," she said meditatively. "Poor Tom, I had no idea it was so bad as that!"

"Do you wish to go round the garden, Miss Rainham, or do you not?" he asked coldly.

"No, I don't. You are too dull for anything, and I am engaged for the next two dances, if you are not."

"Am I to have the pleasure of taking you in to supper?" in a perfectly colourless tone.

"Yes—for the sake of appearances; but for my own inclinations—no."

"Which is it to be?" he persisted quietly.

"Which do you advise?" she asked, pausing at the window, and facing him in the moonlight. "I'll leave it to you."

"I advise nothing," looking back into the blue eyes steadily. "Please yourself."

"I will—and Mr. Marchmont! He has been bothering about it all the evening."

"Quite right; don't disappoint him, Trix. I must resign you now to your next partner."

So they parted—pleasantly, for it was in the flaunting gaslight; and the eyes of the world—their little world—were upon them.

Trix felt convinced that she should find Charley Marchmont—the eldest son of the house, and a very good-looking young fellow—far more agreeable company than the man she had jilted; but though she worked very hard, and strove to be her usual gay, coquettish self, the attempt was

by no means so successful as could have been wished; and young Marchmont had never found her so difficult to get on with as he did that night.

It is possible that the sight of Captain Despard sitting in the conservatory, engaged in earnest conversation with Fay Robinson—who was looking prettier than ever in the subdued light—may have had something to do with her ill-humour. But however that may have been, Captain Despard appeared to enjoy himself amazingly; and Trix could not but feel that he had somehow succeeded in turning the tables upon her in a most humiliating manner.

And yet he had kept his word to her in every respect. She had nothing really to reproach him with, and that was the most annoying part of the matter.

CHAPTER III.

FIVE days had passed since Trix and Captain Despard had decided that their engagement had better cease, and the last evening had come.

On the morrow they were both to leave the pleasant country house where they had spent the last few weeks together: but they had scarcely exchanged half-a-dozen words save in the presence of others since the night of the dance; and those few had not been of a nature to modify the strained relations which existed between them.

On this last evening there was again a dance at the Manor House, to which many beside the house-party were invited; a brother officer of Captain Despard's was also expected, but he had only arrived after dinner was over, and dancing had already begun before Trix saw him.

She had wondered whether Captain Despard would take an early opportunity of introducing him to her, and smiled rather drearily at the thought of what a base fraud she was, posing as his fiancée, while all the time they were only waiting till this visit should be over to announce that their engagement was broken off for ever. Of course, if he were really trying to keep up appearances, he could scarcely fail to do so; and Trix watched with rising excitement for the arrival of this brother officer of her lost lover's, of whom she had often heard him speak in terms of warm affection.

They entered together, and, without so much as a glance in her direction, passed on into the conservatory, where she had

seen Miss Robinson disappear not five minutes before.

It was too much.

Trix felt that she could bear no more; and stepping quietly out on to the terrace, she wandered off down the garden; and as the glimmering moonlight shone through the trees overhead, she passed on through ever-changing alternations of light and shade, of shine and shadow. The night air fanned her flushed face, and dried the hot tears that rose to her blue eyes; but it could not soothe her passionate pain, or cool her burning wrath with herself, with Captain Despard, with all the world. This was what her foolish flirtations had brought her to, and now—thanks to Fay's charms—it was too late to repent; he was lost to her, and it would be worse than useless to try and win him back.

Thus thinking, she reached the spot where they had agreed to part on that sunny morning nearly a week ago. A rustic seat beneath one of the spreading chestnut-trees had been a favourite resting-place with them both in the earlier, happier days of their engagement; and there Trix sat down to reproach herself with her folly and brood over the past, before returning to play her part in the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room, whence the festive strains of dance music came faintly to her ears.

Presently she looked up with a start; some one was approaching across the dewy grass, and in another moment Captain Despard stood before her.

"Rather cold for sitting out in that thin dress, is it not?" he asked. "Anyhow, I've taken the liberty of bringing you some one else's shawl, which you will oblige me by wearing."

"I am not cold, thank you," she replied somewhat unsteadily, for she had not yet got her voice quite under control.

"You soon will be, though, if you sit here much longer," and he quietly settled the matter by wrapping the shawl around her.

"I—I am going in again directly."

"Not for a few minutes longer, I think, Trix," he said, in a tone of conviction, as he seated himself near her.

"You forget"—bitterly—"we are alone, Captain Despard. There is no need to keep up appearances now."

"True; I suppose it must have been the associations of this place that almost made me forget—your hint was most opportune."

"Indeed! And why?"

"I might have forgotten altogether, and gone on forgetting; and that would have been extremely awkward."

"Why do you stay here?" she asked abruptly. "Fay Robinson will be wondering what has become of you."

"I think not."

"But she will miss you."

"No;" and he laughed as at some pleasant recollection. "Miss Robinson will gladly spare me for a little while."

"I don't understand you."

"No! Have you ever understood me, do you think? Though we were engaged for six weeks, I doubt whether you ever really understood me."

"'We were engaged,'" she repeated, and there was a little catch in her breath that almost stopped the words. "Yes; it is over now."

"Do you regret it, Trix?" he said softly.

There was no answer for a moment, and he watched her in silence. How pretty she looked in the pale moonlight, even though her face was carefully averted from him, and he could see nothing but her delicate profile against the dark shadows beyond. The light dress she wore and the white filmy shawl harmonised admirably with her exquisite colouring, and gave her an ethereal look that was not usual to her, and charmed by its very novelty.

"Do you regret it?" he repeated; and Trix, instead of answering, turned upon him with a desperate effort to recover her usual careless gaiety of manner.

"Why do you stay here asking impossible questions? Don't you hear that they are playing your favourite waltz? Why don't you go in and amuse yourself?"

"Because I can amuse myself far better out here," he replied deliberately.

"Oh! Have you and Miss Robinson quarrelled?"

"Certainly not. Whatever put that idea into your head?"

"I thought—I can't understand why you are here."

"Do you wish to know?" he asked.

"You told me to flirt with whom I pleased, you may remember!"

"Yes;" as he paused for a reply.

"Well, it pleases me to flirt with you—you have no objection, Trix?"

"Flirt—with me!" she cried. "Oh, how can you, Tom? It—it is insulting after all that has passed."

"Why? That it is past is your doing, not mine," he said quietly. "It is our last evening together, you know."

"I know." Her voice was almost inaudible now.

"And to-morrow we shall part for ever."

"Yes."

"So you may as well be kind for once, dear."

"Kind!" she echoed bitterly. "How can you ask me to be kind! You forget that I am a flirt! That I care for nothing and nobody but myself! That I—— Oh, Tom; go away, and leave me to myself."

"All in good time; but I want to say something to you first. Trix, give me your hand a moment—the one with the badge of slavery upon it—you are not going to refuse me that, surely! It is for the last time, you know. Now, see here," as she let him take her slender white fingers. "If ever—or I ought rather to say whenever—you are engaged to another man who loves you, don't treat him as you have treated me. You may do it once too often, and hurt yourself at last."

"Then you did love me once!" she said, raising her wistful blue eyes to his.

"No; for I love you now and always—to my sorrow!"

"What, flirt though I am?"

"Yes; if I had loved you less, we might have hit it off better. But I couldn't look on contentedly while the woman I cared for flirted with other fellows. I must be all or nothing to her."

The white fingers trembled in his own. There were tears in her voice as she replied:

"And do you think it was pleasant to me to see you and Fay Robinson always together? Do you not know——"

"I said the 'woman I cared for,' Trix. I cannot flatter myself than I am the man for whom you care."

"Oh, Tom, forgive me! I do care—I do, indeed!" she cried, and with that the long pent-up storm of emotion grew too strong for her, and she broke into passionate tears.

"Trix, dearest! are you sure, quite sure?" he said tenderly, as he drew her to him till the golden head rested on his shoulder. "Remember, it must be all or nothing now! I love you too well to have you unless that is clearly understood."

"And you, Tom—I love you, too," wistfully.

"Oh, you need not fear for me," he laughed. "I am no flirt by nature, but only by expediency."

"And Fay——"

"Is a good little soul, dear, and has been privately engaged for some time to Bob Grey. They said I might tell you, but don't let it go any further at present. That is why he came here to-night."

"And does she know——"

"That I love you better than all the world besides? Yes, of course she does, and nothing else matters."

"No," she said thoughtfully, "nothing else matters—now. But, oh, Tom, you made me very miserable!"

"And you me, darling; so we may cry quits there! After all, you treated me very badly, and I only gave you tit for tat!"

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MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacott," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXI. RESTLESS.

FORSTER'S party made quite a sensation down the line. At first the experience of travelling considerably subdued the already jaded spirits of the East; but, when the crossing was over, the strange sense of freedom began to affect the young men, and from henceforth, whenever the train stopped, some of Forster's tribe might be seen making a raid out of their carriage, seized with the desire to see everything. From the blouses of the foreigners to the sudden appearance of the ticket-collector, all contributed to raise their spirits. Jokes flew round, and by the time Paris was reached, Forster was fairly wearied by his efforts to keep his flock together. He missed the ever helpful Philip, who was always ready to relieve him of some of his responsibilities, but having found a cheap hotel for his "lost tribe," as Dora called them, he so far broke through his rule as to seek out his mother and sisters at the Normandie. He wanted to show off to his friends the Louvre and Notre Dame, and anything else he could get in on the morrow, and so meant to get up early.

"There you are, Forster!" exclaimed his mother. "It does seem strange to see you alone; I was so afraid those poor dear young men would end by making you quite ill."

"It was rather warm, and they wanted to smoke a good deal, but on the whole we have enjoyed ourselves immensely," said Forster, smiling.

"My dear boy! You don't really mean it! It is so very good of you."

"Mother! please remember that it is not good of me. You don't know how my heart sinks when I see what a holiday means for these young fellows. They simply can't realise it. They have been slaves for so long that they don't know how to be free."

"But there are no slaves in England. It is not at all legal, and there are all kinds of laws about employing young people. I know this because Lady Lucy Rodney read them out to us the other day. I remember it because I got rather confused about work-girls. I thought they might not work after eight o'clock, even for themselves, but it was not that quite. Poor dear girls, I'm sure I should like them to be quite idle, at least not that, because that would make them restless, but it is difficult to arrange it all. Are you going to dine with us?"

"I had dinner with my party, thank you, mother, but I'll rest here till you come up again. Dora, mind you talk to your next neighbour, and do use your best French."

"Not if he is English," interposed Mrs. Bethune, "because some English people are so shy of airing their French. When I was young we spoke French quite as well as Madame de Sévigné. I used to know some of her letters by heart, but Adela and Dora are not fond of her."

"I wish she had married Fénélon and made all one thing of it. 'Télémaque' and Madame's letters were my youthful enemies," said Dora.

"My dear! French Bishops never marry. At least, we never hear of it."

"No, of course, I suppose it was impossible; but you always say married life improves people. I don't believe it would improve Forster."

Forster smiled. Once upon a time he would have been displeased.

"I can rest in peace now I am not married. There is your dinner-bell."

"I do hope your wife won't have to go abroad with your parties, dear," said Mrs. Bethune. "It would be so awkward for her."

"I shall never marry, mother, so don't waste your pity on this imaginary lady."

"Oh, you must really, Forster. Not a poor dear girl of no family, but a—"

They had reached the hall, and Dora was seen overlooking the names in the visitors' book.

"Look, Forster, isn't it funny? That is certainly Mr. Gillbanks's writing, only in his worst style. 'Mr. and Mrs. Gillbanks Winskell.' He has taken her name. How odd! Did you know they were abroad?"

Forster turned pale; but Dora did not notice this, as she had to follow her mother and Adela. Forster remained in the hall staring at the names. It seemed like a dream to him. He tried to imagine the Princess with Philip, and he could not do it. "She is so proud and beautiful, he so simple and so kind."

"It is strange, very strange," he said to himself; "but Philip would not listen to reason." Then he turned away, and walked slowly upstairs, to wait for his mother and sisters. He was very fond of smoking, but it was against his social creed to smoke more than his friends could do, so he resisted the temptation, and took a book from his pocket. The book was not of a very exciting character, and he found his mind wandering to Philip and Penelope, his wife. His wife! How strange that Philip should have been so infatuated by a woman who was evidently as proud as Lucifer; a woman who had nothing in common with him, and whose strange education must quite unfit her for the life that would suit Philip Gillbanks. Deep down in his heart, Forster felt pained at Philip's desertion, and at Penelope's rejection of him. He had always found that he could easily lead men and women. He had never cared much about this till he had discovered something in Penelope Winskell which, in a mysterious way, made life sweeter. Now he tried to think of reasons to account for his sense of injury. She was proud, selfish, money-loving. Her beauty had been her snare. In all these ways she was unworthy of devotion, and certainly she was unworthy of Philip.

Something was wrong with the machinery of the world. Socialism required a man to have no cares of his own; it required one whose heart was whole, and Forster felt that at this moment his soul was not entirely at one with his party. Then he despised himself for shirking his duty, self-imposed though it was. He wanted Philip back with him, and he wanted, almost more, his own peace of mind restored to him. It was the first time that Forster's feeling of the perfect continuity of the pleasure of life had failed. He woke up from a long happy dream of doing, to an unpleasant reality of vain thinking.

When the ladies returned to their private sitting-room Forster was by no means inclined to talk.

"Oh, Forster!" exclaimed Dora, "I wish you had been at the table-d'hôte, there was such a pretty girl there. Mother, who is always looking for your wife—just like the lady who was always looking for the robber under her bed—declared that she would exactly suit you."

"Her brother was a clever, odd-looking man," added Adela; "he must be an author or something of that sort."

"They have been here some time, for the sister has never been to Paris before, and so I asked her if she had seen the Princess. I mean I described her."

"How you did talk, Dora! You are certainly not shy," said her mother. "When I was young my parents never sat at table-d'hôte."

"I am glad we are not tied by prejudice now. Well, Forster, she recognised my description at once, only she said that the beautiful lady did not look at all like a bride, and the bridegroom, who had a reddish, boyish, nice face, seemed to be very attentive to his wife."

"Dora, how can you gossip about my friends?" said Forster, and Dora blushed.

"I thought you would like to know. I do hope we shall meet them. The Princess is not like any other woman I have seen."

"Well, now I think she has either no soul or too much," said Adela. "I never could make her out. She was proud, of course, but not exactly of her beauty. I'm glad she is not our sister-in-law!"

"What is the name of this pretty girl, Dora?"

"Ida De Lucy. Isn't it romantic? I told her we were going on to-morrow, and she said she thought Paris was fascinating, and that she had still much more to see, but her brother does not like big cities."

"I must go," said Forster, rising. "Your conversation is frivolous, Dora. Anyhow, don't gossip about Philip's wife. A friend's affairs are sacred. Good-night, mother, I shall meet you to-morrow; I have telegraphed to reserve a *dépendance* at Vidars, so that we shall not be in your way."

"Oh, Forster! In my way! I am so glad, dear boy, to think that all your friends can enjoy themselves. But I wish you had come alone. You want rest, I am sure of it, and in this way you will get none."

Forster wandered up and down the Rue de Rivoli before he returned to his cheap hotel. Dora's careless words had been anything but soothing to his mind. What did this marriage signify? Still more, why had he himself fallen in love with this woman, whom Adela pronounced to have too much or too little soul? He could not sleep that night; the heat oppressed him; and the next day he found life a real burden. His party became all at once a heavy responsibility, and this feeling caused Forster to blame himself severely.

He was glad enough when late at night they reached their destination, and, after seeing to everybody's comfort, he threw himself on his small Swiss bed, and at last fell asleep. He felt weary the next day, but was less anxious about his party. The young men were to be let loose among the woods and mountains to enjoy themselves in their own way. The only stipulation he made was, their safe return every evening in time for a late supper. He wanted to teach them to love nature for its own sake, not because he told them it was beautiful, and he wanted to make men of these sickly-looking East Londoners. For himself he only wanted rest and solitude.

When he appeared at *déjeuner* Dora ran up to him.

"Oh, Forster, you do look tired! Mother and Adela are resting, but I am ready to come with you. Isn't this a pretty place? Where is your party?"

"I shall let them alone now. They will be happy learning to be happy, so now I will allow you to have your turn, Dora."

"Monsieur and mademoiselle have seats here," said the waiter, "near the other English visitors."

Forster sat down and gazed at the faces round him. There were none which roused his interests. The chairs next to his own were empty. He thought he would prefer being next to foreigners, but was too lazy to interfere with the arrangements of waiters. In a short time he heard steps, then before

he could turn round Philip had put his hand on his shoulder. But was it Philip? How strange he looked—something was gone out of his face, only the old affection was unchanged.

"Forster, how strange that you should come here. Your sister is with you?"

Forster rose as if in a dream, and held out his hand to Penelope.

Philip said no word of introduction. Why should he? And Penelope appeared so exactly as if she were in a London drawing-room, that it was almost difficult to realise that she was now Philip's wife. Happily Dora was not shy, and immediately broke in with:

"Oh, Mrs. Gillbanks—no, it's Winskell, isn't it?—I saw it in the papers. This is nice! Forster has been dull and tired, and you will cheer him up. He missed you so much. We have brought an East End party. This is a nice quiet place, and we are hoping to have long expeditions. I am glad! Forster, let me sit near the Princess. We must call you that still. It seems so natural, and you look just like one. Mother will be glad to see you, and so will Adela."

Philip took the chair next to Forster.

"It does seem strange that we should meet," he said quietly—very quietly.

"Yes," said Forster. "What made you come here?"

"I like this place," said Penelope to Dora; "it is something like home; only the snow mountains look so wonderful. I have never seen them before. Yes, I do like travelling."

Dora expected some ecstatic remarks about Philip, but none came. Her youthful ideas were a little disappointed. Then her thoughts went to the other extreme. "Of course they don't want to be like common lovers. Yes, it is nice, very nice of them. How pleased Adela will be. She is beautiful; I wish Forster had married her. A sister-in-law like Penelope would be charming."

Dora, looking up, saw Forster's eyes fixed on his plate.

"I believe," said Dora to herself, "I believe that Forster did want to marry her, and that is why he is so odd now. How very strange; but I won't say anything about it. Poor old Forster! And how horrid of Philip Gillbanks to cut him out!"

CHAPTER XXII. PHILIP'S WIFE.

MRS. BETHUNE was delighted to hear Dora's news. It was charming to have

that dear, sweet, pretty Princess in the same hotel; and Forster would cheer up now that his friend was with him again. They could both go with those poor, dear fellows; and Dora and Adela would amuse the Princess. The kind soul settled everything, and it was only needed for the actors to do all that she expected of them for the play to end happily. But actors are proverbially tiresome, and Philip Gillbanks, when he followed his wife into the salon that evening, did not look nearly so happy as Mrs. Bethune expected. As to Forster, he did not appear at all, much to Philip's disappointment.

"I suppose he is with his young men. How very tiresome it is that Forster will think about his duty, isn't it, Mr. Gillbanks? At least, I know it's right; but now that you are married, you need not trouble yourself about entertaining those who have no claim upon you."

"Penelope, do you mind if I go and see after Forster's people?" said Philip.

"Do go," answered Penelope, in quite an indifferent voice, as she took a chair near to Adela.

Philip came back to see that his wife's chair was drawn close to the window, from which she could see an exquisite panorama of mountains, now deepening into greys and purples. The party had taken possession of a small salon, leaving the big drawing-room to the foreigners, and it might have been a social evening in England, so entirely were they left to themselves.

"Are you comfortable," Philip said, fetching a cushion for her, "and can I get you your book?"

"No, thank you, I shall like talking to Mrs. Bethune. Do arrange any expeditions you like; I prefer sitting in the woods to-morrow."

"Are you sure? If Forster should really want me, it might be as well to go; but you——"

"I shall want nothing," said Penelope coldly, and Philip went away.

Mrs. Bethune was not observant; only Dora's sharp eyes noted the expression of Penelope's face, whilst Adela remarked, laughing:

"You are not like Emily Rookwood. If Jack wants to go somewhere she always insists on going with him. It is so foolish of wives to be so exacting."

Penelope looked up at Adela, and the look seemed to Dora half questioning. But she was silent, and it was Mrs. Bethune who continued:

"Your wedding was a very quiet one, of course. We should have been so glad to have attended it, you know, dear Mrs. Gillbanks."

"Mother, Mrs. Winakell you must say."

"Ah, yes, thank you, Dora. I shall call you Princess, if I may; it is easier. We feel as if you belonged to us, because Forster used to talk about you so much. I may say so now!"

"Thank you," Penelope answered suddenly, "it is so kind of you to say that. I feel lonely now that I am so far from home. I am so glad you came here. I hope you will stay a long time, as long as we do. I don't like being abroad very much, but the Palace is being done up, and my uncle thought it better we should go away."

"Of course you miss your daisies, but you have your husband now, dear Princess."

"No one can take uncle's place," said Penelope, suddenly raising her head. "You know he is far more to me than my own father. I obey him in everything. Yes, in everything. It is quite right, quite right."

"People have to obey their husbands," said Adela, smiling. "I wonder if I should! I am sure Dora would not, she is so much accustomed to rule us all. I pity the man who undertakes to rule her."

"I always obey Forster," said Dora, "because he is always right. He misses Mr. Gillbanks so much. Do you know, Princess, he says men are no good when they marry."

"Why not?" said Penelope. "I shall not prevent Philip doing his duty."

"Oh! but you are his duty. Forster knows that Mr. Winakell must think only of you now."

Penelope was silent, and Dora noticed then and afterwards that she always was silent when Philip's name was mentioned.

The happy family life of the Bethunes seemed to give a home feeling to the small salon, and Penelope, so little accustomed to the companionship of her own sex, began to enjoy it. She even laughed over Dora's recital of the table-d'hôte conversation, which she picked up and repeated with clever accuracy.

It was quite late before they separated, but when they met the two friends in the hall, Forster came forward to shake hands with Penelope. There was but little light in the passage, and nothing betrayed the Princess's change of colour.

"Will you forgive me for having kept your husband so late? We were arranging

an expedition for to-morrow," he said simply.

Philip went up to his wife, but he did not address her.

"I am so glad you are able to make us useful," said Penelope. "Can I help you in any way?"

"You? Oh, if you would come and see us start. There are some of the same young men here whom you saw at Richmond."

"Dora and Adela are going to teach me my duties," she said, smiling, as Dora admiringly put her arm into hers.

"I told our Princess, Forster, that you make us all work. She will be as willing a slave as we are if she stays much longer with us. You men can go when you like, we mean to arrange picnics of our own. Adela and mother can dawdle about, and we shall roam."

"Good night," said the Princess suddenly, for Philip was holding a candle, and she followed him.

Forster dawdled about a little while longer with his sister, and then returned to the *dépendance*. He argued out with himself that he must become accustomed to Philip's new life, and that he must accept the fact of his marriage with Penelope. It was utterly foolish to avoid them, in fact as far as Philip went it was impossible. He could never disclose the sudden hope he had once had, nor its more sudden downfall. He must stifle regret because there can be no such thing about another man's wife, that man also being his friend.

Forster faced the danger at once, for he knew that the very sight of Penelope was a pleasure to him. That he could not help, but need that debar him from seeing her? He could not understand the marriage. The idea which had made him warn Philip that he was being married for his money, would not retain its hold upon him in presence of Penelope's simplicity. She looked too beautiful for such sordid motives to belong to her. One thing troubled him, however; Philip had not once mentioned his wife to him, and the eagerness with which he threw himself into the old plans was unnatural in a happy bridegroom. But Forster felt that Philip was not likely to confide in the man who had tried to dissuade him from marrying the woman he adored. Should he begin the subject, and should he confess the truth? No, he could not tell him that a few days before her engagement,

Penelope Winskell had allowed Forster to hold her hand, and had almost allowed him to believe she loved him. Forster argued the matter backward and forward, and could not reconcile himself to any theory he formed on the subject. He must go on facts. This beautiful woman, the only woman who had ever inspired him with love, was Philip's wife. Philip was his friend of long standing, and his wife must be his friend too. Nothing more, but surely nothing less. This could not be wrong, and as for the rest, it was buried in a deep grave. At this moment, his wound was a little healed by Philip's cordial manner. It was the old devotion, the old trust, but surely something added to it. It was as if Philip silently appealed to him for sympathy in some trouble which he could not put into words, and Forster's mind refused to understand the appeal. Then Forster resolved to think no more of the matter. He had already given way too much to despondency, now he felt strengthened. He could, he must, return to his first duty, that of proving his principles as to the equality of man. This evening, therefore, life was brighter for him than it had been a week ago.

"It really is very nice," said Mrs. Bethune, as she looked out upon the beautiful mountains from her balcony window. "It is so pleasant to have met the Princess again. Did you notice, Adela, how people turn round to look at her?"

"No wonder; she is a picture of stately beauty. But do you think she is your idea of a bride?"

"Poor dear Mr. Gillbanks is hardly enough of the lover, I should say."

Dora was in the next room, and put in her word as she usually did.

"Mr. Gillbanks does everything for her, mother; he watches her every movement. I'm sure he is a devoted husband. If they do not agree, more likely it is the fault of the proud Princess."

"She is quite right to be calm," said Adela. "I hate people who spoon in public. You know Jack wouldn't take any notice of Emily the first few months of their marriage. He said it was bad form."

"I wish I understood people who marry," said Dora. "When I marry, it will be some one just like Forster."

"Then you will certainly be an old maid, Dolly. There isn't another Forster," said Adela.

"He would be angry if he heard you say that. Good night. I dare say if we

saw the Princess in private, she is very devoted to the 'preux chevalier,' as Forster calls him."

Dora shut her door, but to herself she said :

"I shan't talk about it, but I shall just notice. I believe the Princess hasn't married for love, at least, not for the usual love. Philip Gillbanks is nice—yes, he is very nice. After Forster I would not mind marrying a man like him."

On the east side of the house, there was a suite of apartments which the Gillbanks-Winskells had taken. A private sitting-room and three other rooms—two on one side, and one on the other side of their sitting-room—made up their charming quarters. The hotel-keeper made Philip pay double for each room, but that was of little consequence to him.

Philip had wished Penelope to have a maid, but there was no time to choose one, and Penzie preferred being without one. She had never been accustomed to the help of much personal service. The third bedroom Philip used as a study, leaving his wife to write in their salon.

This evening they met on the balcony, and stood a few minutes side by side. A spur of Mont Blanc was glistening in the weird moonlight. The Dent-du-Midi towards the south raised its wondrous head into a blue sky, with an effect not reproducible by words or colour. The deep Rhone valley that separated them from the mountains was not visible from where they stood, but the gulf, though hidden, was there.

"Penelope," said Philip softly, "you must try and not look so sad." He did not give her any endearing title, though his very soul seemed to be unveiled in his eyes.

"I did not mean to look sad," she said coldly.

"I am glad the Bethunes have come, it will make this place more cheerful for you."

"Yes, they are very kind; I do like them."

"Forster is glad of my help. You do not mind, do you?"

"Mind! Oh, no. I told you, Philip, that you are to go on as if—as if I did not exist. We have agreed about it; we need not discuss it again."

"Agreed! Don't use that word, dearest. I have obeyed you. You have told me you do not love me, and that——"

"I told you so before we married," she put in quickly.

"Yes, I know, but I—I did not then understand your full meaning."

"That was not my fault, I did not love you then, I do not love you now. I obeyed my uncle, nothing more."

"I shall not complain, dearest, because I don't think you know what you are doing. I don't believe that——"

Penelope turned away a little impatiently.

"I told you at Paris, Philip, what I had decided. Of course you might be different, and you might compel me to—but——"

"Hush, dearest. Don't say any more. You told me you would be my wife only in name, and I said then that I would wait till I had won your love. I love you more than I love myself. I love you, Penelope, and I promised to devote my life to you. Perhaps I could make you love me, but I would rather wait and win the right. Dearest, my wife in the eyes of God, I shall win you yet."

"You promised to avoid all these scenes," said Penelope wearily. "I am grateful to you for respecting my wishes, very grateful. I did not think things would turn out as they have done. I knew I must marry for money, because of uncle's wishes, but—but—you know the rest. You were not deceived by me, at all events. You blindly deceived yourself. Now we have agreed that anyhow the world shall never know our difference of opinion. A Winskell does not ever shirk her duty." Penelope had spoken quickly and impatiently, very differently to her usual manner.

"You are tired, dearest; I won't keep you up any longer." He took her hand and kissed it respectfully, as if she had indeed been a Princess, far removed from him and his poor interests.

"We can be free of each other, you need not ask me always before you settle anything. Settle it all as you like."

"Don't you care at all for me, Penelope?" he asked in a low voice.

She made another impatient movement.

"I wish you would not go on asking me such questions. I told you the exact truth at Paris. I married you because my uncle made me see it was my duty. I always obey him."

"He did us a great wrong, dearest," said Philip, leaning against the balcony, and looking furtively at the beautiful woman who was his wife only in name. "He must be mad to have allowed you to do such a thing. Suppose love were to—tell me, dearest, I must ask, I must. Have you

ever loved? No, it is impossible, or you could not have done this thing."

Penelope flushed angrily. These scenes had never entered into her calculations.

"If I have, or if I have not, will make no difference to you, Philip."

She turned her back on the beautiful scene, and passed through the window into the sitting-room.

Philip followed her.

"Yes, it does make a difference to me. If you do not know what love is, darling, I will teach you what it means. You shall see that a man can be unselfish, in what concerns his own happiness, and that he can love a woman for herself; that she can be to him as an angel from heaven. My dearest, I can and I will teach you all this, if you will be patient and open with me; if you tell me you have never loved another."

Penelope had her hand on the handle of her bedroom door and she turned round still more impatiently.

"Why do you persecute me? I told you everything at Paris, everything but that. I have never seen but one man I could care about, but my personal inclination is nothing in comparison with my duty."

"You have seen one man you could love?"

"Is this keeping your promise?"

"No—I am afraid not, but I must know. How can I win you if—if——"

"I wish you would not talk about winning me. Can you be any one but yourself?"

"Then you can love, Penelope?"

"Love, love! Oh, I could have loved that man, but it was not to be. You need not be afraid of any scandal. A Winskell never disgraced herself or her family." Penelope raised her head proudly as she stepped into her room and shut the door.

Philip stayed in the balcony till far on into the night. He strove with God and with the darkness that surrounded him. But at last, all the words that came to his lips were:

"I did not know, I never guessed she meant that, but Forster warned me. I must be brave, I must."

COUNTRY CHARACTERS.

To thoroughly enter into the human interests of a country life, one must put aside the impression that small farmers and agricultural labourers are necessarily a dull class because they assume a some-

what stolid demeanour when seen once a week in the ceremonious discomfort of their Sunday clothes. After many years' acquaintance, perhaps some trifling accident suddenly reveals that the gruff, weather-beaten old man, whose conversational powers seemed strictly limited to an interchange of greetings, is really a potential humorist of the first order. Life to him is by no means the monotonous round of drudgery that it appears on the surface. The behaviour of his fellow-labourers, their antecedents, money difficulties, and family affairs in general, afford him ample food for reflection and critical comment. Even in the most remote country districts his circle of acquaintances is far larger than one's own, owing to the fact that he instinctively exchanges a few words with every passer-by on his way to and from work.

Upon the whole, it may be said that people employed in agricultural labour take but little interest in general news. They read an occasional local paper, and an account of the death or funeral of some county magnate excites a certain amount of attention, but many pieces of news of an intrinsically interesting nature are apt to fall flat, simply because they respond to nothing in the hearer's former experience. "My son is always wondering at me for reading about those foreign wars and fightings. But there was a soldier come to our parish when I was a young girl, who'd fought the French many a time," said an old farmer's wife to me one day. That glimpse of a red coat in early youth had given her an interest in military matters to the end of her days. Mrs. Thompson's memories were all the more vivid for being so strictly limited. During considerably over eighty years she lived in one country neighbourhood, without any of those ambitions to take railway journeys, go to the sea-side, or visit London, which produce so much restlessness and discontent in a more enterprising generation. She was a typical representative of the old-fashioned class of farmeress; in person somewhat gaunt and stern; with thick, iron-grey hair drawn down in deep curtains over her temples, and surmounted by a monumental erection of black lace. A black stuff dress, a little rusty from steady wear, was gathered in quite impartially all round her waist, and a small brown knitted shawl completed her costume. One could see at a glance that she was hard-working and truthful in no common

degree, also that she would have but little mercy on those who fell short of her standard of virtue. She was always to be found in the long, old-fashioned kitchen of the farmhouse; where scarcely sufficient light penetrated through the low, wide-latticed window for one to discern clearly the huge sides of bacon and pieces of pickled beef that hung from the ceiling. The more ornamental features of the room were a corner cupboard of shiny old oak, a tall eight-day clock, and a row of ostentatiously bright brass candlesticks ranged along the high narrow mantelpiece. An old brass punch ladle and some gigantic snuffers completed the list of what one might term Mrs. Thompson's bric-à-brac. Two or three steel bits, a curb chain, and a pair of spurs hanging on nails inside the large open chimney would have to be classed rather under the head of useful implements.

The ceremonies attending a visit to Mrs. Thompson were as unvarying as Court etiquette. After establishing me in a cushioned arm-chair standing in the most painful proximity to the fire, my hostess would retire deliberately to a side-table and, opening a drawer, produce a black silk apron, which she substituted for the great cotton wrap in which she had been previously enveloped. Then, having removed a black bonnet, which she was wont to perch on the top of her cap whilst going about the yard, she would return, and seating herself on a stiff wooden chair, prepare for the luxury of an idle talk. Constant bodily activity had become such a rooted habit with Mrs. Thompson that she clung to it almost up to the end, although the strain of managing a farmhouse was obviously too much for her strength. When at last, yielding to the repeated entreaties of her friends, she was persuaded to spend a portion of the day in the parlour, resting on the "lounge," instead of busily superintending the kitchen work, she appreciated the change no more than a great Commoner, whose fighting days are over, enjoys the dreary dignity of sharing in the peaceful councils of the Lords. These extremely simple habits were solely traceable to old-fashioned farmhouse traditions, and were in no way due to penury. Speaking one day of a servant girl who had an annoying habit of satisfying her curiosity by prying into all the available drawers and cupboards, Mrs. Thompson incidentally mentioned to me that she disliked her bedroom

being meddled with, as she kept a bit of loose money in the table drawer. "Well, might be eighty—might be a hundred pounds perhaps!" Why such a sum should have been left in a table drawer when she had a prosperous banking account is a mystery; but the habit probably dated from days when banking accounts were not so common as they are now.

When mentioning servant girls, I touch on the bane of Mrs. Thompson's life. Brooding over their moral deficiencies occupied an incredible amount of her time, when increasing age debarred her from more active occupations. In the early days of our acquaintance I fondly hoped that the grievance might be merely temporary, and fade away at the next domestic change. But as time went on I gradually discovered that the reigning "girl" was invariably the worst of her species. There was nothing of which Mrs. Thompson did not in turn suspect them, from the lowest depths of moral turpitude to tampering with the contents of her work-box. Her characteristic habit of slowly rising from her seat in the midst of a conversation, and stealthily creeping to look behind the door, was mainly owing to the presence of the girl in the back kitchen. It is scarcely to be wondered at that girls engaged yearly at the hiring fair in the neighbouring small town, without a shred of character being demanded from their former employers, should not turn out to be much help or comfort. But it was the traditional method of obtaining farmhouse servants, and consequently Mrs. Thompson could not bring herself to deviate from it.

In amusing contrast to Mrs. Thompson there lived on a neighbouring farm a family where the daughters had been brought up quite in the modern style—tennis playing, dancing, and performances on the piano being included in their education. It is needless to say that these accomplishments incurred the old lady's unmitigated scorn. "All well enough for the folk who have nothing else to do!" she would say, with the air of one who makes a handsome concession to the demands of art. But hearing of these new-fangled doings naturally sharpened her eyes to the shortcomings of the whole family. "I've been told," she said to me once, in a sepulchral whisper, "I've been told by those as know for certain, that Mrs. Harding has to buy her lard before ever the year's out!" After this awful revelation she was evidently

satisfied that my opinion of Mrs. Harding could never be quite the same as before. All this old-fashioned prejudice showed a mind sadly narrowed by running in one groove for the best part of a century. However, when on meeting Miss Harding one July day, and enquiring after the progress of the haymaking, she airily replied that she knew nothing about the farm work, I felt some sympathy with the strictures of the older generation.

In the eyes of elderly country people the great increase of educational advantages is a mere snare, leading young people into much waste of time through reading story-books and writing constant letters to their lovers. One old cottage dame was never weary of dilating with shocked annoyance on the fact that her grandchildren were set to learn "a nonsensical bit of stuff of which a body can't make head or tail," instead of confining their studies mainly to working samplers as in her young days. It was an unheard-of waste of time, according to her views, to learn anything but the Bible by heart; and certainly the trial scene in the "Merchant of Venice," which I subsequently discovered to be the task in question, did seem rather over the heads of juvenile agricultural labourers. Whether the children derived any benefit from it is more than I can say. I only ascertained that it was taught by order of the examiner, and that great difficulty was experienced in making the children comprehend the plot of a Shakespeare play.

If one is anxious to appreciate one's neighbours impartially, it is necessary sooner or later to face the fact that standards of conduct differ considerably in different classes. For instance, in certain circles, drunkenness, if not so excessive as to interfere with business, is no disability. Many farmers and labourers, men of most engaging qualities in other respects, are absolutely broken down in health at a comparatively early age by years of excess. They are conscious of it themselves, and the fact is well known to their neighbours, but neither from one nor the other does one hear any expression of shame or blame. They refer to their past drinking or fighting propensities as merely the natural weaknesses of youth, or, if they regret them, it is mainly on account of the worldly folly displayed in such a waste of health and strength. In the light of sins they do not present themselves. Of course these remarks do not apply to habitual drunkards, but only to

the class of men who return home once a week in the condition that is best described as being "market pier."

At one time I had ample opportunities of investigating this singular mental attitude as exhibited by an exceedingly genial old farmer, who was dying some twenty years before his time from a sheer breakdown of strength, consequent upon a too riotous enjoyment of social gatherings. A more courteous or entertaining host it would have been difficult to find, and detailing his experiences to a sympathetic listener was one of the few amusements left to him when he was at last confined to the house by his increasing infirmities. Being of Welsh extraction, though now renting a farm on the English side of the border, it follows as a matter of course that he took an immense interest in theological questions as represented by the minute differences between one shade of dissent and another.

"And there are folks so careless they couldn't tell you the difference between a Methodist and a Latter-Day Christian!" he exclaimed indignantly one day, when reflecting on his neighbours' shortcomings.

Mr. Morgan's dissent in no way interfered with his attending the parish church in the absence of a conveniently situated chapel, and he evidently regarded religion in any form as an eminently interesting subject for discussion. But coupled with this religious bent of mind was a most incongruous appreciation of the coarser pleasures, which led him to dwell lovingly on the days when life had been one unceasing round of fights, fairs, and drinking bouts. Like many of his class he possessed in a remarkable degree the gift of narrative, and his stories were so funny that I have sometimes weakly attempted to reproduce them. But shorn of the old man's dramatic delivery and forcible provincialisms they fell very flat, and were even calculated to excite censure on account of their doubtful moral tendency. There was one reminiscence in particular of how Mr. Morgan sold a blind horse to an acquaintance, whose reasoning faculties were temporarily in abeyance, and of his subsequent adventures in connection with this feat, that was related with so much humour that while listening one almost lost sight of the moral obliquity of the proceeding. Mr. Morgan's own appearance by no means suggested a minute attention to personal adornment, nevertheless he had his standard of the amount

of show that befitted various stations in life. "Who'd think to see her, with no more shape than any sack, that she'd been a woman worth a good bit of money when Thomas married her!" was his comment on a neighbouring farmer's wife who had certainly neglected her figure to a deplorable extent. The old man was especially proud of the method in which he had dealt with an attack of influenza, and gleefully mentioned that it had been much commented on in the neighbourhood. His procedure had the merit of extreme simplicity. He went to bed and continued to drink whisky till his consciousness failed him; and in his own mind he was completely satisfied that he had achieved a safe and easy cure.

The way in which poor people take situations for granted saves them an infinity of trouble. Visiting a cottager's wife one day I found a most dishevelled old tramp sitting at the table, carefully breaking pieces of bread into a bowl of hot water. Whilst making his meal he gave me a rambling account of his birth and parentage, from which I vaguely gathered that in early youth his prospects had been of the brightest, and that his education had embraced a knowledge of music and various foreign languages. Now, however, owing to somebody's fault, he was reduced to begging his way about the country and sleeping under hedges. He continued his journey as soon as the meal was finished, bearing off with him a most unsavoury-looking bundle that he had left in the back kitchen. It appeared that though the old fellow was undoubtedly crazy, there was some truth in his story. His nominal home was in a distant village, but from time to time he would start off on little tours, living frugally enough on what he collected as he went. He was no particular friend of my hostess's, as I had at first imagined, but was in the habit of calling at her house once or twice a year, and borrowing a basin of boiling water, in which he used to soak the scraps of bread he had begged by the way. These visitations she took without the smallest surprise.

"He says as how he was a gentleman born," she remarked, rising to put the door open after his departure, "but he be a terrible dirty old fellow now, and no mistake! I've always got to let in a breath of air after he've been here!"

Country people, though as a rule exceedingly averse to parting with money, have no corresponding objection to giving

away money's value in kind. Indeed, on certain traditional occasions they are almost recklessly profuse, as on St. Thomas's Day, when many an old-fashioned farmer's wife will give away materials for plum puddings to such poor people as present themselves. This custom of "gooding" or "mumping" day, as it is called, is much abused; many cottagers who would never think of begging at other times appearing shamelessly as mendicants on this one day. At Christmas also there are farms where "sixpence and a mince pie as big as a plate" may be had almost for asking.

Speaking generally, one does not encounter much extreme poverty in the depths of the country. Of course there are cases in which some lonely old man or woman will live for years mainly supported on such scraps as their neighbours can spare them, sooner than go into the work-house. How they exist at all is something of a mystery, but it is to be remembered that in the country there are many trifles to be obtained free of cost, for all of which the poor in towns have to pay hard cash. The amount of wood collected by the women and children of a family for consumption during the winter is, in some districts, very considerable. Then there is the patch of garden ground, capable of an infinite variety of treatment. Of late years there has been a tendency to imagine that laying out unusually large gardens with new cottages must of necessity confer a benefit upon the tenant. That this is not always the opinion of the cottagers themselves I have on the authority of an old man, who, by sheer energy and hard work, has risen from being an agricultural labourer to the position of bailiff on a considerable estate. He maintains that a quarter of an acre of land is sufficient for any one to cultivate after work hours, and that a greater quantity either taxes a man's strength beyond what is beneficial, or, more often, is utterly neglected. As a rule farmers allow their men potato plots, which they work for them with the rest of the plough land, thus saving an infinity of spade labour. Indeed it is rarely that one sees the whole of a cottage garden under cultivation. Whatever may be its size, a large proportion is usually given over to weeds and waste heaps.

It is difficult for any person, unaccustomed to the country, to realise the conspicuous part that pigs play in the lives of most fairly prosperous cottagers. All through the autumn months, if one requires a woman

to give extra help in the house, one is apt to be met by the reply: "Please, I don't rightly see how I can leave home for the whole day, seeing as we've put up our pig to fat." The difficulty is sometimes to be got over by allowing the charwoman to run home and minister to the wants of her fat pig. But a time comes when even this expedient fails. You are not met with a downright refusal, which would be considered an extreme rudeness by a country woman, when speaking to a social superior. "Well, I don't know how ever I shall manage to come, for we shall be killing our pig all next week!" she replies, in a tone of reproachful embarrassment, and though the words sound undecided enough, this is really an intimation that the speaker would not leave home for anything short of a summons to a parent's death bed. More than once I have been surprised to find sick old women, who had been hitherto affectionately nursed by their married daughters, suddenly left to wait upon themselves at a very injudiciously early stage of convalescence. Some such dialogue as the following has ensued:

"And indeed I don't feel able for much," says the old woman, "but there! my daughter couldn't stop away from home no longer."

"I hope her children are not ill!" is my natural enquiry.

"Oh lor' no! nothing of that! But she's got her pig to kill on Monday, so she were like bound to go."

When one takes into consideration that the value of a fat pig is probably about seven pounds; and that, in addition to having fed and tended him herself, it is the woman's place to undertake all the lengthy and laborious salting of the meat after it is cut up; it is small wonder that she regards the annual visit of the pork butcher as ushering in the most important week of the year.

It is sometimes curious to notice the points on which poor people relax their rigid habits of economy. One knows respectable families in which, from constant sickness or a series of misfortunes, the bare necessities of life have been sometimes difficult of attainment, and who nevertheless have the walls of their rooms hung with numerous photographs and coloured pictures in more or less ornate frames. This remark is made in no critical spirit, for it is surely conceivable that in the long run more satisfaction may be got out of contemplating these little treasures than

could possibly be afforded by a few extra meat meals.

A far less satisfactory expenditure is involved in the constant short railway journeys to the nearest town which of late years have become a fixed habit with the majority of cottagers. On market day every little station within ten miles or so of a country town is crowded, not only with farmers' wives going in to sell their butter and poultry, but also with half the village women intent on making their weekly purchases and meeting their neighbours. The journey is made on the smallest pretext. "Please, mum, Tom wanted a pair of boots, so mother's took him to town to get them," I was told on one occasion. The idea of taking a child's size, and bringing the boots back to him, never seemed to enter their minds, any more than the fact that railway-tickets add considerably to the expenses of the said boots. Of course some of the women are fortunate enough to get lifts in carts, but even then I doubt the expediency of a weekly visit to town, for as a farmer's wife once remarked: "The worst of going among the shops is one generally brings home something that one don't really want."

The practice of walking great distances has been almost abandoned by country people since the increase of railways. An old man who combines shoemaking with farming a bit of land, tells me that years ago he and his wife used to think nothing of carrying their fowls and ducks to the market town, seven miles off, and returning laden with household purchases. Now, every labourer's wife goes in by train. The thin ready-made boots, which, on account of their fatal cheapness, are so universally worn, form in themselves an adequate reason for not attempting to walk the distance. That these constant journeys to town are not necessary for the replenishing of household stores, is proved by the fact that, when incapacitated by illness, people manage to do very well without them. Indeed, it is customary now for bakers' and grocers' carts to run through even remote country districts once or twice a week.

In connection with the walking exploits of former generations, I must mention a farmer's wife who in her earlier days had habitually carried great baskets of cream cheeses to two market towns, situated respectively at about ten and fifteen miles from her house, the return journey also

being performed on foot. She saw nothing particularly wonderful about this feat, and lived to a great age, although it must be owned that the form taken by her last illness was probably due to having previously overburdened herself. During her last years she used to ride a small white pony to market, and appear upon it in great state every autumn at the harvest thanksgiving service, when she made an annual lament over the grave of her first husband, in the parish churchyard, quite undeterred by the presence of the excellent man who did duty as second.

The contrast between the mental attitude of the different generations in village life is very marked. At one end of the scale we have the school children, conversant with many branches of general information, as defined by a Government examiner. At the other end is the old grandmother, still firmly believing in signs, spells, and wise women. The parents occupy an intermediate position, being very proud of their children's scholastic successes; and yet with a vague feeling of confidence in the older knowledge, of which they are more than half ashamed. Quite lately an old woman eagerly enquired if I had noticed anything wrong about a field of wheat belonging to a neighbouring farmer. Upon my replying in the negative she hastened to explain that since the wheat had come up it was apparent that by some mistake a line had been missed in sowing, and this was, as everybody knew, the surest sign of a death in the farmer's family within the year. She said it was "the talk of the place," and added with grim anticipation: "Well, those who live will see, before the year's out!"

Certainly a touch of superstition does wonderfully heighten the picturesque interest of a narrative. Mrs. Evans, for instance, is a practical, hard-working farmer's widow, usually immersed in the labours of a large farmhouse. Yet if you can find her at leisure—which is seldom, the intervals of dairy work being taken up with much brewing and washing—you will soon learn that she has had strange experiences. She will freely tell you, in her curiously modulated Welsh voice, how her poor husband was brought home at midnight, on his pony, dying from the effects of a drunken quarrel. The whole scene is dramatically reproduced after the lapse of years; how she waited up hour after hour for her man to return from market. "A good husband, he

was," she says, "and never gave me a cross word except when he was in drink." Her pent-up indignation breaks forth as she dwells on how the two farmers quarrelled as they rode home together along the dark country road, and how the people in a wayside cottage, hearing strange sounds of strife, presently came out and found her poor man lying unconscious, half immersed in a pool of water. As soon as the day broke Mrs. Evans sent off to her mother's house to beg that she would come and help nurse the injured man. But the old woman returned a flat refusal. It seems that during the night she had been much alarmed by a large white bird fluttering against her window. Of course after such an unmistakeable preage of death her son-in-law's illness could but end in one way, and she absolutely declined to be mixed up in an affair which was destined to terminate in a coroner's inquest. Her most gloomy anticipations were fulfilled, for not only was there an inquest, but—still more terrible to the uneducated mind—a post-mortem examination to decide on the immediate cause of death; all of which Mrs. Evans describes with a superabundance of realistic detail.

As might be expected, Mrs. Evans has implicit belief in the medical efficacy of charms and spells. Being recently in some danger through a sudden attack of hemorrhage, brought on by over-exertion, she went, it is true, through the preliminary form of sending for the local doctor, and partially following his advice. But in her inmost heart she was not very sanguine about the results of his treatment, and openly expressed her intention, should he prove incompetent to deal with her case, of calling in an old woman, who was reputed to have done wonders under similar circumstances. "She do say some words over you, I don't rightly know what they be; but there's many a one that she have cured after they've been given up by the doctor!" That was Mrs. Evans's account of the healing process, detailed with the utmost good faith. However, she was not able to test the old woman's powers in her own person, as, contrary to all expectation, the regular medical practitioner was eminently successful in restoring her to health.

Whilst visiting amongst cottagers one cannot help remarking the extraordinary lack of common sense displayed in bringing up children and nursing the sick. Careless ignorance, quite as much as poverty, is accountable for the wonderful mixture of

unsuitable substances upon which the babies are too often reared.

"There! He don't seem at all well, that he don't! Maybe it's a bit of cork that he swallowed when he were having a drink of father's cider that's upset him," said a labourer's wife to me one day, when accounting for the sudden indisposition of her child, aged two. Upon another occasion a woman explained to me how she had gone on an excursion to the sea-side, which involved rising about four a.m., followed by six hours in the train, and a return at midnight, because she thought it would do her two children—one a baby in arms—so much good to have some sea air.

There can be no doubt that poor people, although losing many lives, are saved much anxiety by their fatalism and belief that illnesses are inevitable evils. Whilst the clergyman and the squire are worrying and fretting lest their families should suffer in some prevailing epidemic, the other inhabitants of the village are seldom terrified into taking the smallest precautions against infection. Of course, any isolation of the patient in an ordinary cottage is clearly impossible, and even if it could be managed would run counter to all traditional methods of exhibiting sympathy by perpetually running in to exchange a few words with the sufferer. Every allowance must be made for the neighbourly kindness that is often exhibited during outbreaks of illness, but when all this is taken into consideration, much danger might be avoided if people could repress their curiosity to personally examine specially unattractive forms of disease. I have been told of a cottage woman who proudly carried about, and exhibited to her friends, pieces of skin from her child, who was peeling after scarlet fever. It has also come under my own observation that in a wayside public-house there can be several scarlet fever cases and a death from diphtheria, without visibly diminishing its popularity as a place of resort whilst the illnesses ran their course.

When recently visiting a bed-ridden old woman of eighty, who was suffering from an attack of congestion of the lungs, I found her permanently established in a corner of the kitchen, with constant cooking, drying of newly-washed clothes, and occasional shoe-making, going on round her bed. It was mid-winter, and there were four doors to the room—one leading straight into the garden—through which a constant stream of neighbours were for ever coming and

going, to enquire into and comment on the condition of the invalid. Yet my old friend had lived in that kitchen day and night ever since she became bed-ridden, more than a year before, preferring it with its constant noise, bustle, and contending smells, to the comparative isolation of a bedroom. And—granted the possibility of existing at all under such conditions—it was certainly much more cheerful downstairs. When at her worst, and apparently in a most critical state of health, she found more comfort in quenching her feverish thirst with sips of home-brewed beer out of a tea-cup than in any other fashion. The discomforts of the situation were in no way apparent to her; in fact both she and her family were evidently convinced that no possible pains had been spared to conduce to her recovery. Curiously enough the lung mischief passed off with far less trouble than might have been anticipated, showing that a condition of things which would be absolutely intolerable to one class of invalid is in no way detrimental to another.

On the all-important subject of sport, the different views of various country people are very strongly marked. One steady old mason of my acquaintance, at the first indication that the hounds were in the neighbourhood, would throw down his tools, and run after them all day; whilst another equally industrious workman could scarcely conceal his contempt for the amount of time and money expended on such sports. One day, finding a little village boy busily engaged in trying to push an unwilling cat down a hole in a bank, I elicited from him that the ambition of his life was to keep a dog and hunt things. In the meantime, he had obtained permission from the good-natured farmer to try and catch a rabbit with the help of his mother's cat, which was participating in the sport much against its will. Some months later, hearing that the child was ill, I went to his home, and found him lying in bed half unconscious. Presently, however, he started up, and excitedly muttered some words that I could not catch. "He takes your muff for a dog, ma'am," explained the poor mother. "His mind's running on a dog all the time. We got a bit of a china image of one, thinking it might quiet him—but it ain't no manner of use." Poor Willy's ambition was not destined to be realised, for this proved his last illness.

Upon the whole, it may be said that

visiting country cottagers is a decidedly interesting occupation. In a purely agricultural district, the poverty is seldom of a distressing nature, and though many labourers' wives work hard—more especially if they are sufficiently prosperous to keep a cow, pigs, and poultry—yet their work is of an intermittent nature, that can always be cheerfully set aside in favour of half an hour's gossip. They are a singularly easy class of people to get on with, provided one makes the necessary mental effort to enter into their circumstances—to properly appreciate, for instance, the sense of loss sustained by an old woman when an unusually hard frost breaks the fragment of a glass bottle in which she has kept her blacking "for a matter of forty years." A few local expressions have to be mastered in every fresh neighbourhood. It is puzzling at first to hear a singularly prepossessing lady extolled on account of being "such a plain woman"; to find a hard frost, even if it endure a month, alluded to as "a storm"; and for the utmost rigours of winter only to extort the remark that "it's right cool, indeed!" The sufferer who observes with a groan: "Lor', I haven't enjoyed such a Christmas as this for rheumatics—no, not for years!" is certainly not expressing himself as we do. But a little reflection and imagination will gradually elucidate the knotty points. Above all, if one wants to learn anything of cottagers' private views and habits, one must have patience and plenty of time to spare. Country people cannot be hurried, and the bare suspicion that you are examining their traditional lines of thought in an unsympathetic or critical spirit will at once reduce them to a stolid silence.

BOMBAY.

IN the golden glow of a radiant sunset the noble harbour of Bombay presents a scene of unrivalled beauty. The towers and spires of the shining city rise from a floating veil of amber mist; and the deep blue water, breaking in ripples of flame on the sandy shore, suggests some heavenly vision of the glassy sea mingled with fire. The feathery palms of the island-studded bay look black as night against the burning sky. Fantastic boats with bent spars and tawny sails dart between steamers, ironclads, and floating batteries, the guttural chants of native boatmen mingling

with the songs of English blue-jackets, and the clamour of the unknown tongues which render cosmopolitan Bombay a second Babel.

The little fishing village of Momba-Devi, rented to Biego in A.D. 1548 by the King of Portugal for a handful of silver coins, passed through many strange vicissitudes before reaching her present commanding position as Queen of the Indian Seas. On the marriage of Charles the Second with his Portuguese wife, Catharine of Braganza, he received the island of Bombay as a portion of the bridal dowry, and in 1664 ceded the malarial spot to the East India Company on payment of an annual rent of ten pounds in gold. At this date the population only consisted of ten thousand souls, but the last census registered the number of inhabitants at eight hundred thousand, showing an increase of one hundred and twenty thousand in the preceding decade, while the population of Calcutta remained stationary, and that of Madras diminished during the same period. The early Portuguese settlers in Bombay were so deeply impressed by the natural beauty of this Eastern paradise, that they designated it "A ilha da boa vida"—"The Isle of Happy Life"—a prognostication doomed to disappointment, for the hapless Europeans died off like flies in the fatal atmosphere of Momba-Devi, now the healthy and beautiful city of Bombay. Even thirty years ago the camping-ground on the present esplanade was known as "Aceldama"—"the place to bury strangers in"—but green maidans and stately avenues have replaced stagnant pools and miasmatic swamps, until the fiends of fever and cholera are almost expelled from their former fastness. European enterprise and native munificence combined to secure civic prosperity, and the vast sum of seven millions sterling was expended on architectural and sanitary improvements. Bombay, unlike the majority of great ports, possesses no river, and occupies a cluster of islands artificially connected with each other and with the mainland by means of causeways and viaducts, which form a peninsula and create one of the finest harbours in the East. The original fortifications being out of date and useless for modern warfare, have been partially demolished and efficient defences erected in their place. Three-fifths of the population are Hindus, mainly divided into Vishnavites and Shivaïtes, distinguished from each other by the vertical

or horizontal "Tilak," or "prayer-mark," on the forehead. Two hundred thousand Mohammedans and fifty thousand Parsees inhabit distinct quarters in the native town; and, though the comparatively small number of twelve thousand souls represent the European element, Western influence predominates, and the presence of gas, electric light, and tramways in the Hindu quarter demonstrates the success with which English energy carries the war of progress into the very heart of the enemy's camp. A network of streets converges round the superb railway station, a chef-d'œuvre of modern architecture, with pink and white domes rising above vaulted halls supported on granite pillars, and encircled by balconies, where the sculptured parrots and peacocks of Royal India surround the symbols of British sovereignty.

As the sun sinks below the horizon the strains of the band echo from the brown balconies of the picturesque Yacht Club, and carriages of gaudily-clad natives and white-robed Europeans fill the spacious area of the Apollo Bunder, a noble stone quay which commands one of the fairest sea-pictures in the world. Silvery clouds of pigeons wheel and flutter round the tall warehouses of grain which line a row of wharves laden with bales of cotton, each native merchant contributing his quota of corn towards the support of these feathered pensioners, who pass their little lives in unmolested security. Universal kindness to birds and animals characterises the historic creeds of the East, and in the famous Pinjrapool of Bombay, bullocks, dogs, and birds, otherwise homeless and starving, find food and shelter together with the numerous aged and decrepit animals for which this asylum was erected by native charity.

From the broad verandah of the hotel, shaded by the over-arching trees of the University gardens, we look down upon a curious phase of native life, exhibited for the special entertainment of the "sahib-lok." Performing monkeys execute various gymnastic feats; conjurers swallow fire and swords with stolid impartiality; and snake-charmers, with a deafening din of tom-toms, lure their glistening cobras from baskets of plaited palm-leaves, until the lithe brown bodies of the would-be sorcerers are encircled with gruesome mantles of coiling folds. Although the fangs of the snakes are drawn, and the terrible hoods are spread

in fruitless rage, the operation needs repetition every two months, and the carelessness of long habit creates a certain amount of apprehension. An emerald-green snake wriggles across the road only to fall into the clutches of a mongoose, for this pretty little animal, harmless and affectionate to the world in general, is the deadliest enemy of the snake tribe, killing even the dreaded cobra instantaneously by breaking the back with a sudden jump. A man clad only in a yellow scarf and turban opens a mouth stained with the vivid vermilion of betel-juice, to show that the mango-seed just swallowed has already become a small tree with green leaves pushing towards the light. A woman appears next upon the scene, bringing a crying baby in a closed hamper of bamboo. A dozen swords are instantly thrust through the interstices amid the ear-piercing yells of the supposed victim; but as soon as the formidable blades are withdrawn, the nine-lived infant tumbles out of the basket, and salaams to the assembled audience, holding out her tiny brown hand for the well-deserved "bakshish." As the fun waxes fast and furious, sundry quarrels and recriminations between the rival magicians attract the intervention of the native police, who, "dressed in a little brief authority," symbolised by red turban and blue tunic, soon disperse the performers, bag and baggage, hastening the enforced departure with unlimited kicks and thumps submissively received. The chimes from the clock tower of the University and the cawing of the scavenger crows, which darken the trees in countless numbers as they flock home to roost, never permit more than a comparative silence to fall on the street, and the brilliant groups of all nations gathered in the great hall of the vast hotel make it an epitome of the many-sided life and world-wide interests which distinguish Bombay. The cantonments extend along the shore on either side of the fort, and end at Colaba, where a lighthouse on a rocky point marks the outer horn of the wide inlet known as Back Bay. The officers' bungalows, with their thatched roofs shaded by clustering palms and set in green nests of tropical verdure, look ideal retreats of luxurious repose, and every opening in the walls of foliage shows some blue creek or winding arm of the sea.

The crowding monuments in the nave of the composite English Cathedral recall the early days of the city, so fatal to the

first European colonists that almost every tablet records some tragic or premature severance of the thread of life. Reading between the lines of the crumbling tombstones, with their inflated epitaphs and pompous inscriptions, we learn to estimate aright the heroic acts of courage and self-sacrifice by which the forgotten founders of Bombay laid the foundations of the present Indian Empire. A noble choir, rich in fretted alabaster and costly mosaic, accentuates the rude simplicity of the earlier edifice, but a sympathetic tenderness for the memory of a past so deeply fraught with pain and peril forbids the destruction of the church built by the English pioneers who bequeathed such a rich inheritance to succeeding generations.

The boundless wealth and fertility of Western India are exemplified in the multitude of indigenous products piled up on every side of the great Crawford Market, where spacious halls filled with glowing fruit and fantastic vegetables extend in aisles of gorgeous colouring, which converge like the spokes of a gigantic wheel round the central dome. Pyramids of gardenia and tuberose breathe the rich incense of the tropics, and unknown blossoms of pink and crimson hue droop their heavy bells among yellow allemandas and purple orchids. Rapidity of decay equals luxuriance of growth under an Indian sun, and the flowers already begin to fade in the hands of the brown maidens who sit before every stall stringing garlands of dewy marigolds and fragrant jasmine-buds for the Hindu sanctuaries, which, though numerous in Bombay, present no special features of architectural interest. The great Walkeshwar Temple, on the edge of a sacred Tank, attracts a vast concourse of pilgrims, but the reputation of this favourite shrine is only due to the traditions connected with it as the original stronghold of Brahminism in Mombadevi.

The verdant groves of Malabar Hill offer a welcome retreat from the noise and heat of the tumultuous city, and every green lane between the banks of choice ferns and radiant exotics is a miniature Eden. The flag on Malabar Point waves above the tower of Government House, surrounded by flower-wreathed bungalows and stately mansions buried in the rich foliage of this favourite European suburb, which commands magnificent views of the broken coast washed by the turquoise sea. A forest of cocoanuts fills the foreground, and

the dark wall of the Syadri Mountains beyond the white houses of the sea-girt city intensifies the vivid blue of sky and water. A fleet of fishing-boats catches the sunset light on bamboo masts and tawny sails, gliding through the transient pageant of departing day into the velvet darkness of the swiftly-falling night, and the dazzling constellations leap out one by one into the infinite spaces of the over-arching heavens until they palpitate with coruscations of quivering flame. A glance at the fiery splendour of the Southern Cross or the blazing belt of Orion in these Eastern skies, explains the secret of the magnetic spell which drew the sages of old to read in these far-off worlds the messages sent from heaven to earth, and to unravel the tangled skein of human destiny by the mystic march of the silent stars, regarded with the unconscious poetry of Oriental minds as "the thoughts of Brahma."

The bright and animated streets of the native town are crowded with grotesquely painted temples, fire-houses and mosques, which form appropriate frames for the endless panorama of brilliant living pictures which are unrolled before our wondering eyes as Moalem, Parsee, Hindu, Bunnia and Mahratta mingle with Arab and Negro, Malay and Chinese, savage-looking Belooches and bewildered islanders from the surf-beaten shores of the Laccadives and Maldives. Representatives of almost every Oriental race augment the seething tide of humanity which ebbs and flows through the great Bhendi Bazaar in dazzling waves of colour, though "nature unadorned" undoubtedly occupies the foremost place. The scanty retail trade of olden times has developed into an annual total of one hundred and sixty million sterling, three-fifths of which goes and comes through the Suez Canal, the life-giving artery which quickens the stagnant pulses of the East into vigorous motion.

The great Indian port which attracts this vast concourse of people is pre-eminently a stronghold of the Parsee community. These descendants of the ancient Persians migrated hither from Surat when the commercial prosperity of the early colony declined in consequence of the establishment of the East India Company in Bombay, to which they transferred their capital, thus constituting the new settlement the principal seat of commerce. Untrammelled by the philosophical subtleties of the Hindu, or the narrow prejudices of the Mohammedan, the

keen and brilliant intellect of the Parsee possesses a power of adaptation which secures for it a conspicuous place in the mercantile world as well as in those mental attainments now accessible to every subject in the British Empire, irrespective of race or creed. The advantage of a connection with Surat was promptly realised, and the enterprising Asiatic emigrants crossed the Persian Gulf, bringing the produce of their pearl fisheries to the Dutch and Portuguese "factories," even before the English gained their first footing in India through a treaty granted by Shah Jehan A.D. 1615 to Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador from James the First to the Mogul Court. This contract permitted the nucleus of the East India Company to build a house at Surat, to bear arms, to exercise freedom of religion, and to settle private disputes. The rapid increase of the great mercantile organisation soon required a wider sphere of operation than the circumscribed area of a fortified "factory," and the shrewd Parsees, following in the footsteps of the progressive Western community, established themselves in Bombay, and became an important element in the hybrid population.

In mental and physical endowments the Parsee differs as much from the native races as he does in costume and creed. Bodily strength, untiring perseverance and vigorous energy have brought him to the front, and England possesses no more loyal subjects than the members of the alien colony which holds itself absolutely distinct from the native population of Hindu and Mohammedan origin. The keen face, kindly smile, and musical voice of the portly Parsee, who addresses us in irreproachable English, indicate a type of humanity cast in a totally different mould from that of his Oriental fellow subjects. Freedom from the yoke of caste conduces to success in the practical business of life, the Zoroastrian creed, inaccurately described as "fire-worship," being in reality a form of monotheism, equally exempt from the narrow bigotry of Islam and the superstitious materialism of Brahminism.

The ancient faith of the Persian race arose on those Caspian shores where land and sea are alive with the leaping flames of the naphtha, which coloured the fantastic dreams of the distant past, and suggested the visible presence of divinity upon the mystic altar of Nature. The sacred fire, kindled at some blazing fount on Persian soil, accompanied the wanderers from their native land; and, as the Greek colonists lighted a lamp from the dying embers on

their forsaken hearthstones, and bore it across the sea to kindle the light of home in the country of their adoption, so the Persian exiles carried the hallowed flame to consecrate the new temples of their faith on an alien shore. The chosen emblem of divine glory receives no actual adoration, and the text of the Zend-Avesta, ascribed to Zoroaster himself and regarded as the sole rule of Parsee faith and practice, attributes an equal symbolical value to sun, moon, and sea, commanding that the devotions of the faithful should be offered to the Supreme Being in the presence of one or other of these typical signs, which proclaim His divine power. In obedience to this ancient law, which sought to draw the heart "from Nature up to Nature's God," the first red streak of dawn shows the sandy shore lined with crowds of Parsees, who flock thither, book in hand, to offer up their morning prayers as the sun rises in his strength, and the music of the rolling waves swells the chorus of praise. When the raging billows of the south-west monsoon break in foam and thunder upon the strand, a dense throng of worshippers comes forth in homage to the Creator of the awe-inspiring scene, and the impressive fervour of the chanted supplications blends in harmonious concord with the mysterious voices of the deep.

The entire costume of the Parsee symbolises the mysteries of religion. The gauze shirt, bound with the sacred cord of Kusti, must be woven with seventy-two threads to represent the chapters of the "Izashni," and the twelve knots of the heavy tassel signify the twelve months of the year and represent the perpetual obligation of sacred duties. The embroidery of the sloping black hats carries out a further doctrinal signification, and in the white head-bands of the women warp and woof form an elaborate cryptograph of Zoroastrian theology. Even the mode of wearing the silken saris of pink, primrose, azure, and green, is prescribed by ritual law, though the linen head-band gets pushed further back, and the floating folds of the brilliant veil occasionally combine coquetry with orthodoxy. A solitary instance recurs to memory of a fuzzy fringe framed by head-band and sari, and contrasting strangely with the Asiatic face and beautiful historic dress of the wearer; but the Parsee beauty rarely ventures on such a decided protest against the tyranny of custom and creed.

The possession of unlimited wealth en-

ables the Parsees of Bombay to exercise important control over the fortunes of the city, and rows of splendid mansions in the suburb of Parel show the status of the colony which identifies itself with Western progress while retaining original character and ancient faith. The superb carriages and horses of Parsee ladies contribute to the brilliant effect of Esplanade and Bunder, when fashionable Bombay assembles round the Yacht Club at the close of day, and the liberty accorded to Parsee womanhood paves the way to a distinctive position in the Indian future, for the Zoroastrian maiden remains unfettered by the bondage of "purdah" or the iron chains of caste. Although the Parsee exercises greater religious liberty and wider toleration than his Hindu and Moslem compatriots, he shows implicit obedience to the precepts of his religion, and scrupulously observes the broad lines of demarcation laid down for his guidance. European feet wander almost at will through Brahmin temple and Mohammedan mosque, but the Parsee fire-houses are jealously guarded from unauthorised intrusion, and Western curiosity must halt unsatisfied on the threshold of the forbidden ground, or content itself with a visit to the unique burial-place on Malabar Hill, where the mysterious "Towers of Silence" rise among the rank vegetation of a melancholy garden.

Flights of crumbling steps ascend through a tangled wilderness of banyan and palm to a level plateau crowned by five squat white towers. The wide parapets of each roofless edifice are darkened by crowds of brown vultures, which haunt the dreary cemetery and prey upon the dead bodies which are thrust through a cavity in the side of the building to an iron grating in the centre of the hollow tower. The creed which regards fire as the emblem of Divine Power and Purity necessarily forbids the use of the sacred element for the purpose of cremation, and provides a ghastly substitute for this general practice. From time immemorial the aboriginal inhabitants of the East have buried their dead in a mode which ensured the immediate destruction of the bodily frame, and the barbaric rites of Persian sepulture fulfil this requirement with incredible rapidity. The terrible birds swoop down in scores upon their helpless prey, and in a few moments the disjointed bones drop through the grating, every remaining particle being at once absorbed by filtration

into the earth beneath. The custodian shows a model of the internal arrangements, but though the horrors enacted within the walls are veiled in darkness, the spell-bound silence of the gloomy garden seems fraught with portentous meaning, and the flapping of leaden wings on the battlements emphasizes the brooding hush which lingers round the haunted Towers. The rank and straggling undergrowth suggests decay rather than life, and every ragged palm or distorted banyan seems writhing under a mysterious curse which blights the terrible spot. The dark shadows of the crowding trees, the staring whiteness of the ghastly sepulchres, and the cruel patience of the ghoulish birds, like embodied fiends hungering for their prey, enhance the horrors of the barbaric rites which the unchanging laws of ancient Persia sternly enjoined on her children as of binding obligation.

The steaming heat of November necessitates an early start to the palm-clothed island of Elephanta, six miles from the mainland. The transitory freshness of the radiant dawn vanishes long before the boat arrives at the landing-stage, and with heads protected by sun-umbrella, pith helmet and puggaree, supplemented with the thick folds of numerous handkerchiefs, we slowly and cautiously ascend the interminable steps to a group of those wonderful cave temples which, as monuments of human energy and industry, have been compared to the Pyramids of Egypt. The largest of the three strange sanctuaries of a distant past is one hundred and thirty-two feet in length and width, though only twenty feet high. Rows of massive pillars with sculptured capitals support the overhanging roof of virgin rock, the huge slabs which form the sides of the hoary shrine being carved in high relief with fantastic representations of Hindu gods. A gigantic three-sided bust faces the main entrance, and symbolises the Brahminical Trinity, the hybrid form and features indicating the composite character of the Supreme Being, described in the Shastras as "the God who is neither male nor female." On one of the broad ledges peculiar to the formation of the trap-rock stood the stone elephant from which the name of the island is derived, but the iconoclasts of earlier days, who mutilated and defaced the images of the gods, removed the figure of the sacred animal. Weird statues of Shiva with his wife Parvatti, of Vishnu, of Indra and

the elephant-headed Ganeah loom out in mysterious outlines from the shadowy twilight of each dim interior, where numerous cobras haunt the crevices in the layers of rock, though they seldom show themselves now that the caves of Elephanta have become a favourite resort of the public.

The luxuriant isle, teeming with rich vegetation and crowned with stately palms, is almost uninhabitable. Here and there a narrow path winds into the green recesses of the thick jungle which clothes hill and vale with interlacing trees, and a few native villages nestle in the heart of the woods, but the fever-stricken spot proves so fatal to human life that only those inured by long habit can brave the perilous climate of the malarial snake-den which was formerly known as "Gharapuri"—"The Hill of Purification." The cave temples are of unknown antiquity and probably of Buddhist origin, but, when the purer creed was banished from India, the ancient sanctuaries hewn in the rocks and hidden by the forests were converted by the Brahmin authorities into Hindu shrines. The lives of the custodian and his wife in the adjoining bungalow seem passed in perpetual conflict with snakes and fever, for which even the liberal stipend of the Government appears but very inadequate remuneration.

As we return across the steaming harbour the shimmering atmosphere waves and dances like a floating veil between heaven and earth; the blue sea fades into a milky pallor, as though blanched by the intolerable heat; and the heavy foliage of every palm-fringed islet droops in the blinding glare of the blistering sun. Bombay resembles a city of the dead as we drive past the closed shops and darkened houses of the European quarter to the slumbering hotel, where a drowsy punkah-wallah takes his siesta in the verandah with the cord of the punkah wrapped round one bare brown foot, which stirs as we take refuge in darkness and silence, with the great fans winnowing lazily overhead. The frosts and fogs of distant England seem no longer an unmitigated evil when contrasted with the fierce tyranny of an Eastern sun, though countless modern appliances soften the stress of climate and the bitterness of exile to the successors of those early colonists, who bore the burden and heat of the day unalleviated by the comforts which are now brought within universal reach of luxurious Anglo-India.

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I. IN SEARCH OF SUNSHINE.

NOTHING could be more incongruous in the very nature of things, one would suppose, than a schoolmistress and a ghost, the former being the accredited foe of the latter, waging as she does uncompromising warfare against the imagination and all its works, especially against those vagaries of the mere "fancy unsupported by reason" which take the form of ghosts.

What a reality, then—I was very nearly saying what a substantiality—must have been that phantom which could succeed in presenting itself to the senses of a case-hardened preceptress of youth like Miss Reay! For the medium was not a timorous, excitable pupil alone, not a possibly still more excitable under-teacher only, but the principal herself, and it was from the lips of this lady, to whom I was referred by a most respectable house-agent, that I heard the sufficiently startling explanation of the fact, that a certain house in a certain bright little town "not a hundred miles" from London did not retain its tenants for more than a month at longest.

The eminently respectable house-agent did not consider it necessary to inform me of the above-mentioned peculiarity of the house, for which I offered myself as a tenant for the short term of one year.

It was advertised to let as furnished, and I, a hard-working journalist with a delicate wife and large family of small children, took the advice of our medical man and went down to Sheenton to inspect the house, with a view to trying the effect of change and country air upon the health of my wife and youngsters.

I found it large, and old, and roomy, with big "reception" rooms and innumerable small chambers leading out of one another, up and down steps, and at ends of short, abrupt passages—the very place in which to stow away a round dozen of children with their attendant satellites.

The house was evidently in the early stage of its decadence, for it had once been the home of a Countess. But it still maintained its aristocratic characteristics and pretensions. Three or four fine cedars still graced the beautiful lawn stretching round two sides of the house. The front faced a quiet road leading from the town to the "Hill," while the fourth side turned

a haughty shoulder upon five or six houses of the same height as itself joined on to it on that side, which houses, including the Priory, when Kings and Queens kept state at Sheenton, had been dignified by the title of "Maid of Honour Row."

When, however, maids of honour took flight from Sheenton in the train of Royalty, and the fine old houses found themselves tenanted by other and less exalted personages, the Countess aforesaid, either from expediency or obstinacy, had refused to vacate the best house in the Row, which being the end one had the advantage of a better view and of being almost surrounded by its own grounds, and had maintained herself in the odour of exclusiveness by building a wall with a handsome stone coping almost up to the level of the first-floor windows between her neighbour's forecourt and her own, carrying it as a dwarf wall surmounted by a massive iron palisading round the house-front, to which a covered way led from imposing double doors in the wall to the main entrance.

The Countess had also added a wing joining on to the back of the house nearest the second in the Row, which wing extended to the end of the neighbouring gardens, and so, turning a stern red-bricked back pierced only by three upper windows insolently overlooking without being overlooked, coldly overshadowed and kept out the sunshine from its humbler neighbours.

A very long and lofty room, which occupied the ground-floor of the wing, had been decorated for a music-room. Above were three good-sized bedrooms lighted by the above-named windows.

The Priory was sufficiently well furnished, though the carpets and hangings might have been fresher, but it was comfortable and, above all, cheap; so a bargain was struck with alacrity on both sides, and in the following week we migrated to Sheenton.

The transference of such a family was a truly formidable business. We were the despair of the porters both at Waterloo and Sheenton. Congestion of the traffic seemed imminent. But two empty compartments were found at length for my family and the two nurses—the other servants having gone on to the new house in the morning—and sundry packages which my wife pertinaciously declined to lose sight of, light skirmishers to the main body of perambulators, baths, trunks, and even rocking-horses, and our big mastiff

Duke, who had been forgotten until the last moment, in charge of our one male retainer, "Buttons."

These impediments at length disposed of, the train moved off amid pathetic injunctions from my wife "not to be late home," and frantic waving of little hands from carriage windows, to which I could only respond in the comprehensive formula "All right," and waving vigorously in response to the little ones, I left the station, an object of respectful pity to the assembled railway servants left to make the most of their three minutes' breathing space before another paterfamilias should appear and make their lives a burden.

CHAPTER II.

"THE IRON TONGUE OF MIDNIGHT."

HAVING concluded my business in town, I, like a good husband, refrained with Spartan self-denial from going to my club, and duly appeared at the Priory—why "Priory" no one, not even the omniscient house-agent, could say—in time for dinner, well knowing that that dinner would be hastily got up in the confusion of removal, and would be consequently indigestible. But my wife would have it so, and I submitted.

The dear children, divided between the desire to try their new beds and their anxiety to "tell papa what they thought of the new house," compromised the matter by first going to bed and then appearing in the dining-room in their night-dresses "to see papa," to the horror of all responsible for the maintenance of nursery discipline. They were easily induced to return to their warm nests by a promise that papa would pay them a visit after dinner.

The carrying out of this took up time, the children being broad awake and garrulous to a degree; as also did the circuit of the house, made with a queue of the women at my back—the maids looking half scared at what they called the "unkedness" of the place, in order to ascertain, not that locks, bolts, and bars were in proper working order—I had seen to that in my previous visits—but that they were manageable by the servants, who would thus have no excuse for unfastened doors and windows in the future. Having also ascertained that the gas was equally easy of manipulation, I found that the evening had passed, and it was ten o'clock before I went to my room to commence the two hours' work I had promised myself to complete before the morning.

The children had been housed in the body of the house on account of the warmer aspect.

The end room of the wing being isolated from the rest of the house, I had chosen it for my study; the next served as my dressing-room; and the one nearest the main part was our bedroom. All these rooms had doors opening on to a corridor, running along the length of the wing on the garden side.

I found myself in good vein for writing. The house was deliciously quiet. My window was open; for it was one of those soft, warm October nights which are more genial than many a night in summer. The air was clear, and the soft, deep darkness without seemed to watch at my window like a bodily presence.

After making my usual sprawling flourish at the end of my article, I jerked down the pen with a sigh of relief, threw myself luxuriously back in my chair and looked at my watch. It wanted five minutes to twelve.

At this moment, and without any warning, a strong gust of wind, coming no one could tell why or whence, swept into the room and blew out the lamp, leaving the night silent as before. And then the iron tongue of midnight from the tower of the old Norman church standing lower down the hill, about half-way between us and the town, told twelve with a stentorian volume and solemnity that seemed to fill the room in which I was sitting with almost deafening sound. I had considered the performance of the clock-bell rather mean and tin-kettleish in the daylight, but now the noise was almost terrible. Duke, chained in the stable-yard, appeared to find it so too, for he broke into a prolonged howl.

I forgot to mention, in describing the house, that the coach-house and stables were situated at the back in a paved yard running at the back of the gardens of Maid of Honour Row, and closed at the end by big wooden gates opening upon a narrow back street. This yard was separated from the lawn at the back and side by a wall, in which was a door that could be locked at night.

As I sat in the deep darkness, rather amused than not at the vagaries of wind and sound, and at Duke's umbrage thereat, I was conscious of a curious under-current of sound like the small, shrill piping of the breeze through a keyhole. Without thinking of it, I became aware that the noise

acquired volume and expanded into long-drawn sighs, or rather groans, and to my surprise and alarm resolved itself into a human cry for help.

I rushed to the window. The cry was there more distinct, and unmistakably an appeal from some woman in dire distress. I could even make out the words, "Miss Reay!" with the last vowels long drawn out, and making an inexpressibly sad and blood-curdling sound in the dead of night.

"What is it?" I shouted. "Who is there, and what is the matter?"

No answer, but a gurgling sound as though a hand had been placed over a mouth.

The struggle seemed to be going on at the end of one of the gardens below me, or in the stable-yard about half-way down. The dog's lugubrious whine still continued, and, relighting the lamp, I prepared to go down to the yard.

At this moment my wife, pale as death, rushed into my room, followed by all the maids and children equally white and horrified.

"What is it? Who is it? What is the matter?" cried my wife, re-echoing my own words. "Oh, Geoffrey, my love, you shall not go down alone."

Before I could reply the cries were repeated, and all the women and children looking ready to faint, my wife flew to the window in desperation and repeated the inevitable formula to the accompaniment of Duke's howling.

No reply came, but a window in one of the houses was thrown up, a night-capped head was protruded, and an irate voice enquired:

"What's all this row about? I'll lodge a complaint against that howling brute at the Bench to-morrow, or my name isn't Joseph Simmonds."

"Pardon me, sir," I shouted in my turn, "but the dog is of little consequence compared with that poor creature in distress, whoever she may be. Will you not come and assist me in discovering what is the matter?"

The man burst out laughing, to my great disgust.

"Oh," said he, "you are another of those fools who believe in ghosts. The two last tenants of that house left after a short time on account of voices which were heard at night, not only by one person, but by all in the house—servants, visitors, children—every one was bound to awake and hear the voices. Nobody outside ever hears

them, and the only voice I object to is that of your confounded animal, which is enough to raise the very dead."

I began feebly to apologise for disturbing our neighbour, when the cries recommenced, but more faintly, as though the utterer were becoming exhausted.

"Good night," said the man at the window imperturbably. "I must decline to assist in investigating moonshine, though I shall not fail to look into the matter of that ghost-raising dog," and he closed the window with a bang.

As for me, I could stand the horror and suspense no longer, but slipping my revolver into my breast-pocket, and taking a big stick, I went down the stairs two at a time, to find the astute Buttons at the foot in company with a constable, whom he had intercepted on his beat.

This officer was civil, but firm in his refusal to join me.

"It ain't no manner of use, sir," he said; "this ain't the first time we has been called in, but nobody can't find nothing. Oh, yes, I know what it's like, but you'll find, sir, as the neighbours won't stand the dog," said the constable as he moved off.

All was again quiet when I, with Buttons, whose teeth chattered with fright, unbolted the door into the stable-yard. Duke had ceased to complain as we threw around the light of our lanterns. Nothing unusual was to be seen. The great elms waved gently in a light breeze that had sprung up, and a neighbouring chanticleer began to crow lustily. And then we were left in peace. But on every succeeding night, as long as we remained in that accursed Priory, were we treated to this midnight horror, when every soul belonging to the house was compelled to wake up and listen and be appalled.

CHAPTER III. "GIVE HER A LITTLE EARTH FOR CHARITY."

I NEED not say that the next morning found me at the house-agent's office very much earlier than he wished to see me. He appeared to expect me, however, and evidently anticipated rough weather.

"Well, sir," thundered I, "what do you mean by letting a house with such a drawback as has the Priory?"

"Drawback, sir?" he began. "A most eligible, low-rented——"

But I cut him short with:

"Yes, the house is cheap enough, but it is also exceedingly nasty. You know what

I mean well enough—the last two tenants stayed only a very short time. You know the reason, and I demand that the agreement be at once cancelled and the deposit money returned. We cannot remain at the Priory."

The agent saw that it was no use trying to brazen the matter out.

"Well, sir," said he with an air of relief, "I must give in. You are the third tenant of that troublesome house that has told the same story. But before you take action in the matter, let me beg you to listen to my motives."

"Your motives are nothing to me, sir," I retorted hotly. "We shall leave in a week at farthest—our own house being in the house-painters' hands, we cannot return at once. If what is right is not done by that time you will hear from my lawyers."

"Perhaps if I appeal to you in the name of humanity, you may be inclined to listen, sir," he persisted.

"Humanity," said I, with a bitter laugh. "When you have inhumanly exposed a delicate woman with a family of young children to such shocking circumstances as those of last night, and rendered us practically homeless!"

"It is all true, sir, but I think if you saw the lady—the owner of the house, Miss Reay, in whose interests I have acted——"

"Miss Reay!" I shouted. "Why, that was the name used by the voice in crying for help."

"I admit that, sir, though I never have heard it," he rejoined. "No outsider has, which might make it somewhat difficult for you to establish a case against us, one of the other tenants being dead and the other in San Francisco. And what advantage would you gain? Miss Reay hasn't one penny-piece to rub against another, and you would not care to take the house in judgement, I suppose—it is in the market."

"Make your mind easy about that," I retorted. "There are the servants, and I have invited a whole army of visitors to remain with us one night at least. But you may give me Miss Reay's address."

I was actuated by simple curiosity in going to Chiswick to look for Miss Reay.

I found her living in a poverty-stricken little house near the Mall—a tall, spare, frightened-looking lady, who almost fainted when I told her my errand.

"Now, Miss Reay," I said peremptorily, "you must tell me the history of this

house, and I will deal as leniently with you as I can."

With shaking hands she motioned me to a chair, and then, sinking on an old sofa, after two or three attempts she began:

"Three years since I was conducting a prosperous ladies' boarding-school at Bayswater, when in an evil hour I listened to the persuasions of my brother and removed my school to the Priory, in the purchase of which I sank nearly the whole of my savings.

"Matters never went well with me afterwards. The pupils did not like the house. The servants said it was haunted, but I hoped they would settle down. I knew nothing of my neighbours, excepting that my cook, a garrulous woman, declared that the upper windows in the centre house in the Row were always closely shuttered, that smoke issued from the chimneys at all hours of the night, and that the gardener had repeatedly found the wicket in our stable-yard gates open in the morning, though he had locked it overnight. I paid no heed to these stories, feeling that all the peculiarities had been accounted for when cook said the people were foreigners.

"About three months after I had settled at Sheenton I invited a few friends to spend the evening with me, and, as most of them resided in town, it was necessary to take supper early.

"Crossing the hall between eight and nine o'clock, I heard the voice of my little nephew Philip, who spent most of his time with me.

"The music had probably disturbed his slumbers. I ascended to his bedroom—the front one nearest the neighbouring houses and adjoining mine—the first room in the wing. The dear boy needed some pacifying. I took him out of his bed, wrapped a shawl round him, and placed him in my lap by the window, and was only too glad, being an old-fashioned person, that he persisted in repeating 'Tinkle, tinkle, ickle 'tar,' from beginning to end.

"As he did so with his cherub face turned to the sky, I saw my tall second housemaid pass the dwarf wall in front of the house and go down the Row towards the town. Thinking something might be wanted in the house, of which she was in quest, I was greatly startled when Philip said, 'Look, auntie, Mardaret down in darden.' Throwing up the window, I was just in time to see Margaret, her white 'cloud' round her neck, disappear down the area steps of the centre house of the Row.

"Now I had brought up this girl from a child of twelve years old, and was much attached to her."

Here the narrator almost broke down, but soon was able to continue.

"I was exceedingly vexed, for I had forbidden my servants to gossip with neighbours, least of all with such neighbours. Slightly apprehensive too, I could not tell why, I threw a shawl over my head, and after putting my little pet back into his warm nest, stole quietly out of the house, and knocked at the area door of number three.

"The servant who answered it declared that Margaret had not been there. I insisted that I had seen her enter. The girl was obstinate and I came away.

"At this moment the supper-bell rang, and I was not much surprised to see the cook assisting the parlourmaid.

"Where is Margaret?' I asked.

"She's gone to bed with a headache,' stammered cook, who was a new importation.

"Supper was ended, and there was no Margaret. My guests took their departure towards eleven o'clock, and still the girl had not returned. I thought it time to demand of her evidently frightened fellow-servants what had become of her.

"In their terror, the girls admitted that Margaret, having really a headache, had slipped out to take a turn, and had agreed in returning to call upon the servant at number three, whom she had spoken to at church, in order to gratify their foolish curiosity concerning the mystery of the shuttered windows, and so on.

"My alarm was now very great. We searched the house, and with lanterns explored the garden, calling loudly upon the girl's name. The door into the yard was locked as usual, the gardener taking the key as well as that of the back gates with him, in order to obtain admittance in the morning.

"Almost desperate, I put on my bonnet and went boldly and knocked at the front door of number three. The servant said that her master and mistress were from home, and again protested that my maid was not there.

"Encountering the policeman on his beat on my way back, I told him of my trouble and begged him to go to the house I had just left. He declined to do that, saying that probably the girl would turn up before long, but that he would 'keep an eye on number three.'

"My state of mind may be imagined; but for the sake of my assistants and pupils, who were all huddled together like frightened sheep, I made the best of the matter and affected to go to bed. It was a dark night in October. A low wind swept through the trees and round the house, and died away. As it swelled again it seemed to bring to my ears a wailing sound like a voice in distress. I listened intently, and to my horror heard my own name thrice repeated in accents of pain in Margaret's voice. I flew to the window and called out:

"Margaret, oh, where are you?"

"I am here, in the stable-yard," she answered faintly.

"Why did you not knock at the garden door? We have been looking for you," I said.

"Because I am hurt; I cannot move," she replied, still more faintly.

"Horried, I turned to find all the household behind me, terror-stricken.

"Now," said I to the servants, "you must go and fetch Barton instantly, but bring the keys yourselves."

"Two of them went off, and I turned to the window to comfort poor Margaret with assurances of speedy assistance, though it was some distance to the gardener's cottage.

"I gathered that she had gone to number three, and that, hearing my voice enquiring for her, she had escaped into the garden; that the servant-maid there had helped her to the top of the high fence, from which she had fallen on to the flagstones of the stable-yard; that the other girl, unaware that she was hurt, had hurried back into the house, fearing to be caught with a visitor, and not doubting but that Margaret would find her way home by the garden.

"At length, hearing footsteps and the creaking of hinges in the direction of the back gates, and not doubting that Barton had come to the rescue, though I wondered that the maidservants had not arrived first, I took my candle and descended, desiring the young people to go back to their beds.

"This they of course declined to do, and in their dressing-gowns and with loosened hair, followed me towards the garden door. When about half-way across the lawn, we were transfixed with horror to hear a

piercing shriek from Margaret, followed by the cry, 'Oh, Miss Reay, Miss Reay, they are murdering me!' Then a gurgling noise as though she were being strangled. I rushed to the door and shook it, calling out that help was at hand; and at this moment the front door-bell rang violently. It was the servants with the key. I snatched it, and flew to the door, bidding the girls lock it behind me, and advanced with my lantern into the yard.

"But there was no sign of Margaret. I threw my light from side to side, feeling that the murderer's eyes might be watching me, for I had now no doubt I had heard my poor girl's death-groan. Stay, what was that near the fence? I stooped; it was a long silver arrow, used by Margaret as a brooch to pin her 'cloud,' as she called it. A quantity of white wool was tangled in the brooch, as though it had been torn from her wrap; other fragments of wool lay around, with one of the tassels which finished off the ends of the scarf. I ran down to the gates with some intention of pursuit, and there encountered Barton; and then I fainted, and knew no more until I came to my senses after weeks of brain fever.

"Nothing more was ever heard of poor Margaret, though nothing was left undone which the law could do in order to find traces of the perpetrators of the crime. On searching number three, a complete coiner's plant was found in the upper storey, the owners having escaped. It was supposed that they, habitually using my gate, had come upon poor Margaret, and, thinking her a spy, had made short work with her. But every night at twelve o'clock was this dread scene re-enacted to us who were inmates of the house. My school, of course, was utterly destroyed, and I have lived in the hope that some people might be found less sensitive than we to these awful sounds. But now I give up hoping."

With these despairing words this poor helpless and forlorn schoolmistress sank back upon the shabby sofa and swooned away.

Whether Margaret was murdered or kidnapped remains a mystery, but the recurrence of the weird sounds at midnight is a fact known to all who have been the unfortunate tenants of the Priory at Sheenton.

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By ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII. DISILLUSIONED.

TOWARDS evening the diligence always lumbered into Vidars in a delightful manner, and its arrival was accompanied by a great deal of whip-cracking, with a very minute increase of speed. The diligence did not come up to the "Hotel Rose," but discharged its passengers at the village post office, which was one of half-a-dozen *châlets*. Dora Bethune went every day to see the arrival, for it was just before table-d'hôte, and she could usually persuade the Princess to accompany her. Dora had now become deeply attached to Philip's wife. Her beauty fascinated her, and the strange look of inward reflection and absent-mindedness charmed the girl of seventeen, who was ready to find life romantic, and delighted, moreover, to get a listener to her many stories of Forster. Very little was seen of Forster himself, or of Philip, except at meal-time, and then Philip always took care that his wife was comfortable, and had all she required. No one could help noticing that when he was with her, Philip's attention and watchfulness were never ending, and yet, at the same time, Dora saw that the Princess always looked happier, and smiled more, when her husband was not near. But, young as she was, she kept her own counsel, and allowed her mother to sing the praises of a perfect marriage.

Penelope spent much of her mornings alone in her room, or in wandering out in

the woods near by. She had there found a charming retreat, and she would establish herself with a book and some work, pretending to occupy herself with one or the other, but if the weather were warm, she would generally lean back and dream dreams—sad enough, but sweet in comparison with the reality of the present.

She had never guessed, during that pleasant time in London, when she happily followed the stream of society, what it was she was doing. The will of her uncle had been law, and her heart had never spoken. She had lived among her dales and her mountains, almost forming a part of nature herself, and consumed with the love of the soil on which she had been born. To save it had been her one thought, and now this wish was accomplished. She had obeyed, she had married Philip, and now she rebelled against the result. Was the old home worth her present suffering? For she did suffer daily and hourly. The very fact that Philip was near her, that he had a right over her, and that his intense goodness and unselfishness were her only safeguards, angered her. She felt that she was daily losing something of the old serenity, something of the nobility that had been hers by right of birth and of character. She lived a life at war with her thoughts, attended with an unreasoning dread of Philip. Some day his devotion must be worn out; some day she must give in and own herself conquered; or she must openly break the slight but hateful chain which bound her to him. What she had said to Philip was true enough, she was not the woman to disclose her feelings to any one. She felt glad to be near Forster. She liked to watch him without being seen, but she rebelled at the idea that he was Philip's friend. If he knew, what would Forster

say? He would not believe that she could have done this thing. She seemed to see this now, living so much in company with his sisters and his mother. All these persons had crystal souls, there was nothing about them that they wished to hide. At times she wished to blame her uncle, but the old allegiance was too strong. They both possibly had been wrong, but at the time they had seen no other way. If it were all to begin again, she would probably do again what she had done, only she would pray that it might be another, not Philip Gillbanks—whose goodness repelled her, because she could only return it by dislike.

"In time, however, I shall learn to be patient, I shall be indifferent instead of angry," she said to herself. "I will master this feeling, and I will be happy. I will not let him cloud my life. I am young, and I must be happy. I want to enjoy life, since I cannot have love. If you knew, Forster, what would you say? You, who are born to command. I would have loved you and helped you. Oh, this hateful money! I hate it. I want to be poor again. Why had I to save the estates?"

Then she tried to drive the thought altogether away from her. She must be content to be as she was, with no love to give, nothing but a feeling of gratitude, which was hateful to her because almost forced from her.

These were some of Penelope's thoughts as she daily sat in her hidden corner of the fir wood, or alone on the balcony of the little salon with the western view. She liked watching the varying lights and shadows on the distant mountains. These were more beautiful than her own, but the home-sickness was very strong at times. She wanted Nero, she wanted the old dark passages, the old pictures. Even the steps of the ghost would be welcome now. Here life was modern and strange, and only the Bethune party appealed to her as something so good and true, that the longing to be like them and to tell them everything often seized her. But this could not be. She owed that to Philip. She must not disclose the great wrong she had done him. Not that Penzie called it by this name. She only blamed him for marrying her, regardless of her own disinclination towards him. He had been a fool, and why pity a fool who was only suffering from the consequences of his folly?

Thus passed these days of outward peace, when one evening there was a knock at

the door, and Penelope said, "Come in," dreading to see Philip, but quickly schooling herself to appear calm. It was only Dora's beaming face which appeared. The Princess had never known the happiness of having sisters, and her heart went out to this bright young girl, whose face was the mirror of guileless happiness.

"Oh! dear Princess, come and see the diligence coming up the hill. It is bringing back what Cousin Jack calls 'Forster's ménagerie.' You should have seen how angry Forster was when he once heard Jack say this. He gave him quite a long sermon about the future of England. You know Forster really thinks that some day the poor will rise up against the rich, and that there will be a sort of French Revolution in England. Jack only says 'Nonsense' after one of Forster's talks. What have you been doing all day? Mr. Gillbanks-Winskell is good to leave you so much with us; it is all for the sake of helping Forster."

"I'm so glad he can help your brother."

"Do, dear Princess, come out now. Isn't this a lovely place? Is your dale country prettier?"

"Oh, it's prettier to me, of course, it is home. If you like, I will put on this big hat and come with you."

"You do look lovely! I remember Forster saying once that he thought you were the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. I never remember his admiring any other woman before. He never was a lady's man." Dora looked at Penelope out of the corner of her eyes, but she could detect no sign of any special pleasure in her face. Evidently the Princess did not mind whether she were admired by Forster or by any one else; she had no vanity.

"I wish you were vain," said Dora, laughing. "If I were as pretty as you are I should be vain, but we are none of us pretty. I mean we girls. Of course, Forster is handsome; he stole all the good looks of the family."

"A woman's beauty is only useful for two things," said Penelope almost to herself. "To win the man she wants to marry, and to keep the affection of the man she loves."

"It sounds as if you meant two persons, Princess," laughed Dora. "Oh, come at once. Berger, the coachman, is going so much more quickly than usual."

The two hurried through the hotel grounds and soon found themselves near the post house, where a Swiss official was

bustling about with as much show of importance as he could adopt. He and another man turned to look at the Princess as she passed them. Her beauty seemed to them to belong to another sphere, as if an angel had come down to walk in the Swiss village. The slight sadness of expression on her face—an expression which she did not trouble herself to hide whilst alone with Dora—surprised the rough, jovial official.

"She has lost a child, poor lady. I can see that in her face," he said to his companion.

"What nonsense you talk, Franz!" replied his wife. "The beautiful lady is a bride."

"Then she has not married the right man, if the face means anything. Ah! there is old Berger coming up."

The diligence rattled up at a great pace for the last few yards. The top of it was crowded with men, and from the chaos of legs and arms Philip and Forster came down, accompanied by a gentleman with hair just touching his coat collar and blue spectacles. Then from the inside emerged a young lady, whom Dora at once greeted as Miss De Lucy. In a moment Philip was near his wife.

"Dearest, how nice it is to see you here. We have been out a long time." Philip always came back to her full of hope and love. Some day he believed that he should see a look of love light up the face of the woman he worshipped.

"Dora made me come, and I see she has found a friend." Penelope looked again, but involuntarily it was to see what Forster was doing. She saw that Dora was introducing him to a girl, whose face was so gentle and spiritual that the want of great beauty was hardly missed. Her blue eyes might have been larger, but could not have looked more tenderly at man and beast; her fair hair and dreamy eyes were not dazzling, but full of spirituality.

Penelope distinctly heard Dora's words.

"So Paris has not kept you longer. I never expected to see you again. This is delightful. Forster, you heard me talk of Miss De Lucy."

"We have already spoken to each other. I am so very sorry that my party prevented you from having an outside seat," answered Forster, but his mind was wandering.

"It was hot certainly, but the carriage we tried to hire was engaged. The drive

is over now, and it is delightful to find acquaintances."

"Here is another lady you have met before," exclaimed Dora, going towards Penelope.

Ida De Lucy looked at the Princess—for Dora had given her the history of her name—somewhat shyly.

"How strange we should meet here again! A lovely place to come to. My brother will be happy to join your expeditions."

The party walked slowly towards the hotel: all, that is, except Forster, who, after one glance at Penelope, turned away to join his young men, whilst Philip kept near Penelope.

"We have had a famous expedition this afternoon, and were glad to be brought back by the coach. The spirit of adventure is slowly creeping into the East End blood," he said.

"We are thinking of making a picnic to some woods, and climbing the mountains behind this house," said Penzie, smiling towards Dora. "Miss Bethune challenges me to walk with her to see the sun rise."

"The Princess really believes she can climb better than I can. But will you allow her to come, Mr. Winakell? Married people have to obey their husbands."

"A Princess must please herself," said Philip, as if he were speaking in fun.

"Then we wish to go to-morrow. Can't we tempt you to come with us?"

Philip shook his head.

At table-d'hôte the English were placed together, and had it not been that Philip seldom laughed, a stranger would have thought them a merry party. Mr. De Lucy was an amusing contradiction; fond of setting every one straight, he was also really considerate for his sister. His conversation was now chiefly about passes, guides, the quality of snow and ice, and the wonderful ascents of the Alpine Club men.

"You cannot get more enjoyment out of your climbs than we get out of our walks," said Dora.

"I wish you would persuade my son Forster to join you in some expeditions," said Mrs. Bethune. "He fancies that if he cannot take the nine young men he has with him, he must not indulge in any climbing."

"Good heavens!" said Mr. De Lucy under his breath.

"He says people waste money over endless ascents," put in Dora, "and I'm sure it's true; and then some of the Alpine

men are rather tiresome with their long stories."

"It is all new and delightful to me. My aunt made me promise not to climb, otherwise I would willingly join George in his expeditions," said Ida.

"Then," said Adela, "you must join us in our small excursions. We mean to take the lovely walks here and leave the passes for the men. They will find it very dull without us, won't they?"

Ida smiled.

"It is very good of George to let me travel with him. If it were not for him I should never leave England, so you see I try to behave with due meekness."

Thus the happy talk continued, and Penelope learnt much.

The ladies retired early, Dora promising to knock the next morning at the door of the Princess to be sure she got up.

"I only hope Mr. Gillbanks-Winskell will not be angry with me," said the girl.

Phillip was smoking outside under the portico, talking to Mr. De Lucy, and when his cigar was finished, he strolled over to the *Dépendance* to help Forster with the next day's programme. When he returned, Penelope had retired to her room. He sat a long time alone in the salon. The window was wide open. He leaned his head upon his hand, and his mind went over and over again the event which had led him to his present position. He had believed that he could make his wife love him. He had been a fool, he had not understood the warnings he had received, but had wilfully blinded himself. There was now no reason for blindness; he knew everything, he saw it all. He saw that his wretched money had been the cause of his misfortune. Any other man would have served the Duke's purpose as well. He would not call Penelope mercenary. For herself she cared nothing at all about money, her tastes were simple, but for her house, for her uncle, for her family, for the cursed pride of the old family she had done this thing. If he had known, he would have given up his money, and tried to win her for himself. But what could he do now? Again he roused himself and fought against despair; only cowards despaired. Had he not adopted Penzie's motto: "*Absolutus sum Ignaviæ*"? The strain of keeping up appearances was, however, very great, especially before Forster. He was so glad to be once more with him, and to help him. He liked finding himself again among the old East End friends. The break had been

short, but what a difference it had made! The joy was taken out of it. His own trouble weighed heavily upon him, and it was only by making a supreme effort that he went through each day's work and pleasure. He began to think deeply of the future; how he should best face it. Suppose he could not win Penelope's love? But no, he would not think of that—not yet, at all events, when he had been with her so short a time, and the trial was so new.

Very early the next morning, Dora tapped softly at the door the Princess had indicated, and, without delay, Penelope appeared. She even smiled at Dora's exclamation when she saw her companion dressed in blue serge ready for any climbing.

"This is delightful. No one is awake except the hall porter. Poor man, he did not relish calling me. I had to tread softly for fear of mamma and Adela. I suppose you woke Mr. Winskell?"

"I don't think so," said Penelope, and very soon they found themselves following a lad with a lantern through the small wood, then up a winding road which led on to a mountain. It was still chilly, and the two walked quickly till Dora begged for mercy, for she could not keep up. Up and up they walked, Penelope's quick, springing steps making nothing of the ascent, and every now and then she lifted her head to enjoy the smell of the fir-trees. She felt once more free, once more as if she were treading her own mountain paths. It was too delightful. Suppose all that marriage episode were a mere dream; suppose that now she was awake and was free; free to choose her own life and—free to love!

The road wound up steadily till it reached a wide alp, over which their boots sank into boggy ground, whilst the dawn came slowly creeping on. The boy was silent, but careful and thoughtful beyond his years, as are many of his young countrymen.

"He says there is a *châlet* where we can get warm milk," said Dora, who could chatter French with ease, whilst the Princess only spoke it with difficulty. "I feel as if I were in an enchanted wood, and you an enchanted Princess, doomed to walk through the wood till a beautiful knight should come and deliver you."

"I think it is true," was the answer, spoken in a low voice. "I don't feel as if I were really myself. In my own home I

often went out early, and there I would walk half-way up the great mountain before breakfast, then sit near a small wood, and feast my eyes on all the valleys and the hills, or on the clouds and their shadows. You must come and stay with me, Dora, when we go back."

"Yes, indeed, and I hope you will ask Forster too. He loves wild things and out-of-the-way places; I know he would love it dearly."

"He has not much time, I suppose, to pay visits?"

"Mother says that he must soon have a real rest. These young men are to go at the end of ten days, and then we shall get him to ourselves for a little while. He won't indulge in anything luxurious, only sometimes he forgets, and we get our own way. What good will it do any one if he is sacrificed to ideas of equality? After all, Forster is not the equal of any of these men, though they are nice enough."

"Mr. Bethune is happy in seeing his duty so clearly mapped out for him."

Then the two had to save their breath for the climb. The mystery of the great forest wrapped them round, till once more they reached the open, and climbed the last steep ascent to the lonely chalet. The early breakfast was eaten as if both were really starving, and then there came the call to bid them come and see the sun rise. It was bitterly cold, but that was, of course, a secondary thought. Suddenly the sun seemed to burst from its hidden resting-place, and to shed light and glory over all the exquisite view.

Far away in the horizon rose the pink chain of the Bernese Oberland with tender shades and tender lights merged into each other, whilst nearer rose wooded or sharp peaks making a fitting foreground for the picture. On the left shimmered the pale-blue lake, hardly discernible from the pale-blue sky; and nearer to them, woods, mountains, and beauty in every form.

"Isn't this exquisite!" cried Dora; "we are well rewarded for our climb! It seems to me, Princess, as if you were yourself crowned by this sunlight. I wish Forster were here too; how he would admire it all!"

Penelope turned round and smiled at Dora.

"Your wishes are granted by the fairies. Look, I should say that figure was your brother's."

In a few moments Forster stood near them, and gazed with intense and silent

pleasure at the glories of the sky and the mountains.

"Whatever made you come, Forster?" said Dora, going up to him.

"I could not sleep, so I thought I would follow your example. Could you not persuade Philip to come?" he said, turning towards Penelope, and looking at her with a feeling of wonderment which he could not altogether hide. Then suddenly the feeling turned to secret wrath, as she answered:

"Oh, no; besides this short expedition is beneath the notice of a man."

He answered coldly:

"If we go on we shall come to the three little lakes. They are quaint and rather mysterious-looking. Philip and I brought our family here the other day, and they were so delighted with the echo made by the perpendicular rocks, that I thought they would never leave off shouting out their names."

"I dare say you joined in too, Forster! What did you and Mr. Winskell call out?"

Forster did not answer. He had thought of calling out the name of Penelope, but had stopped himself in time.

"Let us have some more breakfast, then," said Dora, "and come with us. This is delightful. We shall be home before late déjeuner; but perhaps, Forster, you cannot spare the time?"

"Yes, I can. Philip is going to take my place. Mother wanted to take a long drive to-day, and I promised my escort. Very well, let's go in for café-au-lait; even a poor man can afford that beverage. But Mrs. Winskell may want something more substantial."

"Indeed I don't," said Penelope, forgetting her own troubles in the pleasure of life, of youth, and of the beauty of the scene, coupled with the presence of Forster.

"Let's enjoy ourselves for no other reason," said Dora. "Self-denial has charms, I know, but only second-hand charms."

"Self-denial has charms which you have not yet understood, Miss Dora," said Forster, laughing. "Her appetite has never failed; you will see for yourself that a first meal makes no difference to her," and he turned towards Penelope.

They talked nonsense for a little while, and ordered large jugs of hot milk, and having drunk it they started on towards the dark lake, shut in between rocks, and

reflecting the changing shadows of the clouds.

Dora developed a taste for digging up ferns, and she enlisted the help of the boy, whilst Forster and Penelope walked on in front. At first they were silent, then, as they neared the lake, they paused and waited for Dora.

Penelope wanted to tell Forster all the truth. She longed to show him why she had led him to believe that she was free to be loved and to love, and then why she had suddenly turned away from him. But the barrier between them was too great. They must be as strangers if they met, and there must always be that unexplained story between them.

Suddenly Penelope became desperate. She felt as if she were stepping down from the high pedestal on which she had always lived, and that she must throw all her prejudice to the four winds. She would try and be natural with Forster; she would talk to him as if Philip did not exist, and as if she were once more a free-hearted girl.

"This reminds me of home," she said, smiling, and Forster wondered why she did not smile oftener, so much did her face gain by it. "You have never seen my dales, Mr. Bethune; I am longing to show them to you."

"Dora and I must make a pilgrimage there some day, but I don't know when that will be. After these friends of mine go back to London, I shall have a month's holiday, then my winter work will begin again. I have lately been thinking seriously of going abroad."

"Of going abroad! Why?"

"I want to find land where I could train some London men to farm work. I tried it in England, but the experiment was not successful. One wants a new country to teach people to begin a new life. I have six men in my mind—married men—and I believe that, if I went and lived with them, I could train those six to become future pillars of our colony."

"But General Booth is doing all that."

"Not as I want it to be done. I want to take only a few, but I want to give myself to those few. When you take up a mass you must also have a multitude of officers. How can you be sure that these officers will not wreck the whole scheme? It is personal sympathy that alone answers."

"Why do you want to devote your life to strangers?" she asked, feeling as of

old drawn towards this man and his wild plans.

"Why? Because I suppose I see some good in it."

"But it will be lonely. You must let Philip go with you." Penelope felt impulsive. Forster looked up suddenly at her, but he saw no emotion or surprise on her face. She had merely made a natural suggestion.

"Philip has your home and you to look after now."

"Oh! he will not really be wanted at Rothery. As long as my father lives he will be King of the place, you know, and I am afraid there may be friction."

"You will prevent that."

"I! Oh! I can't. I have no influence with my father. My uncle is the best peace-maker, but even he fails very often. Besides, we all really feel he has a right to be obeyed. He is the head of the family." Penelope instinctively raised her head.

"Would you and Philip really join the work?" asked Forster, his old enthusiasm suddenly breaking through his wonderment. "That would be a grand thing indeed!"

"It would help you, you mean?"

"Not that only; it would give stability to the work. People would see then that there was truth in the fellow-feeling which unites us to all classes. One can do nothing without a very high ideal."

"I should like Philip to join you—yes, very much. As for myself, I must not leave my uncle. He must dispose of me, and he wants me."

"You would let Philip go without you?"

"Yes, indeed, especially if he were of any use to you," she said, raising her eyes to Forster's face, and then surprised to see his astonishment.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Winskell, but—but may I speak?"

"About what?" She raised her head at once. With her, pride was always very near the surface.

"About Philip. You know he is my best friend. He has always helped me and believed in what others called my maddest ideas. Well, now that he is married I must not claim him, even if——"

"Yes, you may. I am not sure, indeed, if he will not suggest it himself. He will be miserable at Rothery."

Again Forster looked at Penelope. He could not understand her.

"When a man leaves his wife the world——"

"I did not think you cared about the sayings of the world," she said impatiently.

Dora came up at this moment, her arms full of many uprooted ferns.

"Forster, I shall take them home, and they will look charming in the shrubbery."

"If you transplant these ferns from their native surroundings they will not grow."

"Oh, that is so true," said Penelope quickly. "Even in this beautiful world I feel I could not be happy. It is not like my own wild glen. Come, Dora, let us go on the lake; I see a boat at the little landing-place."

Dora was only too willing, and all three stepped in.

She and Forster each took an oar, and the Princess sat opposite to them. Then they rowed across the silent and dark waters of the inland lake. The perpendicular cliffs rose on one side, and above towered the sad pines, sending far shadows on the still waters.

"Isn't this delightful! I wish you had not renounced the world quite so much, Forster, because we should then get a holiday oftener. What shall you do, Princess, when you go home to your wonderful old Palace?"

Penelope sighed very softly.

"Oh! I don't know. I shall begin the old life again. I used to take walks with Nero, and work, and read with uncle, and listen to Jim Oldeorn's complaints or stories; but I was always happy in the old days."

"But didn't you visit poor people and all that sort of thing? We do. Adela loves poor people, and so do I; at least, I love those in our village, and of course I like Forster's people, because they are his."

"No, I don't like poor people. Our miners don't care about visits, and besides, uncle doesn't wish me to go about among them."

"Mr. Winskell loves Forster's people, doesn't he, Forster? And they adore him. He never puts on any air of condescension. He is perfect with them."

"Phillip knows exactly what to say to them, especially if they are in trouble," said Forster.

Penelope looked away at once and changed the conversation.

"Isn't this little quiet spot perfect? It is warmer now. What a pity we cannot stay all day here."

Forster rested on his oars and looked at the dreary scene, which was yet so full of beauty in its loneliness.

He had a strange feeling that the beautiful woman whose character was so little to be fathomed had not a good influence over him. He wanted to ask her for an explanation of the mystery of her marriage, but he dared not.

"We must not stay very long, Dora," he said, after they had rowed round the lake.

"We may be wanted at home; besides that, we have some way to walk."

Penelope smiled as she said:

"Duty is always troubling one with vain regrets if we do not follow her, and if we do, then there are other regrets!"

It all seemed a pleasant dream to Penelope. The walk home was very lovely, and the sunshine flecked with gold streaks the downward path that had been so dark when they had ascended it in the early morning.

"Phillip must come here with you another day," said Forster, trying again to find an answering tone of pleasure.

"I think coming twice to a spot spoils one's pleasure," said Penelope. "It just destroys the first vivid impression of it."

"If he is at home to-morrow, we will have tea at Darvé, a charming village, and just the right distance for an afternoon's walk," said Forster. "Adela and this new friend can come too. I will send an order in the morning for a special tea to be prepared."

"Thank you," said Penelope, as if she did not much care, all the young joy going out of her voice.

As they neared the hotel, Forster was divided in his mind as to whether the Princess were the most loveable of women, or the most heartless of wives. He could not decide this point, and so he resolved to believe the best of Phillip's wife. His own romance was quickly losing its reality. She was, he said, much too selfish to be the woman he had taken her for. He could never have moulded her to his own ways. He could never have persuaded her to come, as his wife, to found a new colony under the sun of Africa.

When Penelope once more stood on her solitary balcony, the world seemed more beautiful than ever before. She sat down and dreamt of the might-have-been.

"I could have been a good woman with him; but now—now—I must only be a patient one. Oh, uncle, you never guessed what you were doing!"

A COW-BRUTE TRAGEDY.

A WESTERN SKETCH.

It was the loneliest and longest ride I ever had without any of the boys with me, and from a certain incident that happened, it stands out clear in my memory, although I have forgotten many other more eventful things in my Western life. For one thing I acted wrongly in the matter, and held my tongue when I ought to have spoken out; but still, even now, although I can see how wrong it was, I am afraid I should still keep silence if I had to spend the same day all over again.

We had had a fine early autumn that year, one might almost call it a late summer, and the boys were all busy in the many corn patches along the creek, when we heard that the raspberries were ripe up Wild Cat Mountain. Now, the mountain raspberries meant much to us, for on them and the wild plum we based our hopes of jam; and it had always been the custom at berry time that all the ranch people should join in an expedition to pick the fruit for winter use, and camp out several days up the Canon. This particular year, however, the boys declared they could not go, so busy were they in the corn patches and alfalfa fields, which they declared—and rightly too, I am bound to admit—were of far more importance than gathering a few pounds of berries for jam.

We tried persuading them, we tried coaxing, we even tried appealing to their love of good things, but it was all in vain; although they dearly loved jam tarts, yet not one of them would leave the corn patch. So we women gathered in solemn conclave in the churchyard, after church on Sunday, and a small rebellion took place. Go we would for the berries; if not with the boys, we would go without them, and show our menfolk how very well we could manage by ourselves. Seven of us settled to go, and, although the boys grinned very much when they heard of it, I could see they did not like our decision. Not that there was any danger, but there was a little difference of opinion in the matter; Jack declaring, and as a matter of course all the other boys on the creek backing him up, that there would be plenty of time to get the berries in a week's time, when the corn would be stacked, and they could come with us. But, as every woman who has had anything to do with jam knows that after fruit is ripe a week

on the bush spoils it, we knew better than to agree to that dictum, and we determined we would not lose our jam through waiting. It meant plenty of work, we knew that well enough. There would be firing to collect, and fires to be kept up; there would be the horses to be seen to, and alas! worst of all, there would be water to fetch for the kettles and washing up; besides our usual work on such expeditions, the cooking. As for fetching water for purposes of ablution, that did not trouble us; there was the creek at hand, and we would all bathe in that. But still we knew, when all was said and done, that the absence of the boys meant a lot of extra "chores" for us; as for the boys, they were more than ironical over the whole affair, but the more they laughed, the more determined we all felt to show them how exceedingly well we could manage without them.

So we decided to start on Wednesday. Monday being the universal washing day, we knew from sad experience that if we postponed that domestic festival, we should get behindhand all the rest of the week, which although it seems but a little matter, would yet make a great difference in a household where there was only one pair of hands to do everything. Wednesday would give us time to clear up after the wash, and to do the cooking, for we had not only to cook for ourselves, but to leave sufficient to last our menfolk till we returned. The boys proposed, half-laughing, that as we were so independent we should, after we had picked our berries, ride on to Hunter's Park, and give an eye to some of our cattle outfit, which had been driven up there for pasture early in the summer, and left under the care of a Mexican cattle-help; but we did not see this at all, and thought we should have quite enough to do to look after the horses and ourselves, to say nothing of the berries. Monday and Tuesday passed quickly enough, and I surveyed my larder shelves on Tuesday night with a great sigh of relief, although at the moment I felt very tired and not at all inclined for the morrow's expedition. However, a good night's rest would soon set that to rights, and the long day's ride would be resting. All was ready now for my departure; upon the shelves of the "dug-out" which did duty for a larder stood a goodly array of brown crusty loaves and yellow pats of butter, a large puncheon of stewed apricots, and two apple tarts, besides a couple of large cakes, a boiled ham, and two beef roasts. All this was for the

boys' consumption alone, and I fondly hoped there would be enough left to prevent cooking when I first returned, as I knew the berries would want to be "jammed" at once.

My own little store of food stood on one side, naturally limited, as I was going to ride: half a ham, a couple of loaves, some butter in a jar, coffee and sugar, and a tin of condensed milk, a couple of the ever useful gunny sacks being provided to tie them all up in. E., who was going in her buggy, had offered to take bedding enough for us both, and I had already conveyed across to her ranch several tin lard pails to pick my fruit in. She would also take a frying-pan and kettle, plates and cups for us both, so as to give Rory as little as might be to carry besides myself. So then I called the boys in, and they were very pleased at the food provided. I do believe they had thought that in my excitement over the berries, I might have left them short, and after I had showed them their provisions, they condescended to take a little interest in my proceedings. Not that they did not wish me to have a good time, but there had been some difference of opinion as to when the good time should be. They had thought the berries might have waited a week, when they would have been able to go also; but as I knew very well they would have been far too ripe by then, I had to have my own way, and, well—relations had been a little strained between us in consequence. They had called me "obstinate," and I had called them "unkind"; perhaps very hot weather, combined with more work than you know how to get through, is apt to be trying to the best of tempers. So, when the olive-branch was held out, I am afraid I clutched at it with most unbecoming eagerness, and when this was followed up by the offer of a well-beloved hunter's knife to take with me, I felt that the reconciliation was indeed complete.

I was to start about four next day, so as not to travel in the extreme heat, and reach our camping-ground the same night, so as to climb up the mountain early in the morning before the sun got high. So, as the boys said they would knock off work for an hour and start me off, I got a nice afternoon tea ready, and we had a pleasant half-hour together before I went. They mounted me on Rory, tied the gunny sacks on, saw me across the Santa Fe track, gave the pony a cut, and he and I were loping over the prairie towards the Divide, the

ranch rapidly becoming a black speck in the distance.

After a bit, however, I pulled Rory in; we had a long way to go, uphill for the most part, and I did not want my dear little Broncho to get tired. It had been hot when I first started, but before we began the first steep climb the air perceptibly cooled. It had been a long, dry summer that year. All along the horse track were great cracks in the grey earth; even the grass was dried to the same uniform colour. No green was to be seen anywhere, but the poison ivy was already turning to crimson, whilst here and there there were great patches of flowering cactus, and once or twice, where the ground had been disturbed by the plough of an enterprising settler, were clumps of sunflowers, it being a curious fact, and one I have never heard accounted for, that wherever you break ground in that part of Colorado, the sunflower immediately springs up, even if there should be no plants of it within hundreds of yards. Even along the fire-guard on each side of a new railway track you see it, sometimes the smaller kind, sometimes the larger, but always the ubiquitous sunflower is to the fore.

But in late June, when there has been a hot summer, the prairie has lost most of its prettiness, a uniform greyness being the prevailing tint. Up the "Divide" we toiled, or rather Rory did, and I was glad when we reached the crest, and saw below E.'s buggy, for I had only been to the foot of Bear Canon once before, and did not feel over sure where to turn off once the Divide was passed. But I had hoped to fall in with some of the party before then, and as matters turned out I was not mistaken. Rory and I soon caught up E.'s "outfit," and I got in, hitching up my pony at the rear. It was certainly rather steep going down, but after Western fashion we galloped along, passing another buggy on its way to Sedalia, which, as we were two women, and alone, kindly turned out of the track for us to pass, also in Western fashion; had it been a loaded waggon, however, it would have been our place to have drawn aside and made way for the menfolk, every one being of good Dr. Johnson's opinion as to "respecting the burden" out West. At home, too, I had been taught ever since I drove

The rule of the road is a paradox quite,

In riding and driving along.

If you go to the left you are sure to go right;

If you go to the right you are wrong.

But here you always "went to the right," unless you were a "tenderfoot" just out. E.'s buggy was well loaded up with our bedding and no end of food, as she was a generous little creature and always took double shares, in case any one else fell short. And we turned off safely towards Bear Creek, a blue column of smoke rising far up in the thin, fine air, showing us that some of our party had already arrived at the camping-ground and had built their fire. Sure enough, too, when we got up to them preparations for supper were being actively carried on on the other side of the creek. A big fire was blazing, and kettles were already slung across it. We lost no time in unhitching the two horses, watering them and picketing them out with a long rope on a nice patch of mountain grass at no very great distance; then we set to work, got some scrub oak together, covered it with pine-boughs, and laid our comfort-bags upon the tops—these were to be our beds. After that every one collected wood whilst the light lasted to keep the fire in during the night, and then, feeling we had well earned it, we set to work upon our supper. And oh! how hungry we all were, and how we did justice to that meal, although the viands were not very varied, consisting as they did of broiled ham, bread-and-butter, and pumpkin pie. The only drink we had was Arbuckle coffee with condensed milk, but the mountain air is so different from the prairie, that one felt the want of nothing else, the thin, rare air coursed through your veins as though it were champagne. I thought it was a funny-looking camp, seven women all told, and not a man or a shooting-iron amongst us. If only our friends at home could have seen us then, camped as we were at the bottom of the Foot Hills of the great Rockies! There was no one in the great loneliness to molest us. The fire would keep the coyotes and mountain lions off; we were very peacefully inclined and had no wish for any of their skins. All we wanted was a plentiful supply of wild raspberries to see us through the long winter.

Somehow in the neighbourhood of great mountains I never want to talk, and I suppose the rest of our party felt the same, for gradually the chatter died away, and we all crept to bed, taking it in turns to attend to the fire during the night. It was a lovely night, the sky so blue as to look black; the stars were very brilliant; and the moon was shining so brightly that I could see to read a newspaper that had

been flung down at a little distance. I think I laid awake some time after the others had gone to sleep; it was all so new to me. I heard the wail of a distant coyote and the far-off scream of a mountain lion, and I wondered what sort of reception we should meet with did a bear, attracted like ourselves by the berries, come across camp. Then I began to long intensely for the boys, and then—my idle speculations ceased, and like the others, I fell asleep, but I am ashamed to say that, unlike them, I never woke to take my turn at the fire-tending. When I did awake it was dawn, the tops of the snowy peaks ahead were already tinged a rosy pink, and in another moment it was sunlight. The sun, however, has very little power so early in the day, as we found to our cost as we plunged into the creek for our morning's bath. The water was icy cold; even the water snakes had no life in them, and glided off instead of winding in and out of one's limbs—a very creepy sensation. Indeed, so sleepy were the fish that we caught a brace of fine trout in our hands, which made a nice addition to our breakfast-table. With the exception of this dish, breakfast was simply a repetition of supper, and after we had finished we put up some lunch, for we did not intend to return to camp till evening.

It was now about four o'clock; in England the ground would have been dripping with dew, but there was no trouble of that kind here, everything being as dry as a bone. Our path up the mountain was a rough Indian trail, as they are called, allowing of only one person passing up it at a time, and very uncomfortable walking it was, full of large stones which rolled away under one's feet, and coarse gravel, very loose, in which your feet sunk at every step, whilst the fine powdery sand amongst it flew up in your face as you set your foot down. But it was a delicious morning, and the higher one climbed the more exhilarating the air got, till one felt that in spite of the slippery foothold one could walk on for hours and hours.

Higher up still the whole of one side of the mountain was tinged with crimson; this was the raspberry patch, and, reaching it, we soon filled our pails. How bountifully Nature had spread her table in that wild country all round! As far as the eye could reach lay the ripe red berries, growing in such abundance that the leaves of the plants were hardly to be seen for the fruit, and you could gather a quart without

moving from where you stood, off the little low bushes barely two and a half feet high. In fact they grew so low that you could sit down and fill your pail, and many of us did, picking meantime, children's fashion, "two in the mouth and one in the basket." And these berries had certainly a most delicious flavour; they beat the common garden raspberry in that, if not in size. There was plenty of other wild fruit, too, all round—black currants, growing on prickly bushes with gooseberry-shaped leaves, large and fine; whilst the wild gooseberry itself, very small although nice for pies, grew on a smooth-wooded bush, and had leaves like our home currants. Then there were the wild plums and cherries, the latter of which grew like red currants all down a stalk—these last made capital jam, but had rather a peculiar flavour if you ate them uncooked—the plums were golden green when ripe, and very nice eaten any way, whilst the wild grapes were very delicious. But the raspberry was certainly the best of the wild fruits, and we were in luck, too, for no one had been before us, which we had been rather afraid of, as we heard they were selling at a dollar and quarter the pound in the city, and many people used to live out on the mountains in berry time and sell them, as they fetched such a good price. Right in the middle of the great patch, growing on an overhanging ledge of rock, were some bright blue flowers. I struggled towards them and found they were gentians; and we came across many of them before we had finished our berry-picking. I promised myself a few roots to take back, and in scrambling after flowers I believe I afforded a good deal of amusement to the Western girls, who were there for the purpose of picking berries, and did not allow any side issues to interfere with what they intended to do.

As the evening came on apace, we prepared with full pails and tired bodies to scramble back to camp again. But if it had been troublesome clambering up the face of the mountain, it was ten times worse to go down. After a bit I came to the conclusion that the easiest way upon the whole was to sit down, grasp my pail firmly in both hands, and slide along as well as I could, but some of our party had far too much pride to condescend to that mode of proceeding.

Anyway, we all got to camp at last, very tired, exceedingly dirty, and, shall I confess it, not a little cross! Oh! how

we longed that evening for the boys to fill the kettles and collect the wood, and how I wished, let the berries have been as over-ripe as they might, that I had waited till my menfolk had been able to come too. Men somehow never seem to get as tired as we do, or if they do they are too proud to show it. I was for eating a piece of bread-and-butter and going to bed straight off, and only wished to stretch out my limbs on the pine boughs and go to sleep.

But the others were more used to the life, and insisted on a good supper first, and I must say that after that and a dip in the creek I felt a different person. And when we went to bed I did not feel at all inclined for sleep. I watched the fire lazily, much interested in the turpentine oozing out of the pitch-pine logs. The air was cool, almost with a keen chillness that reminded one of the dawn; there was no wind to speak of, but every now and again a little breeze would spring up, somewhere, so it seemed, in the pine-tops, bending them backwards and forwards with a gentle sighing, like the lapping of a summer sea on a sandy beach, and then for a few moments the scent of the pine needles would fill the air. We were burning cedar logs, too, amongst the other wood that evening—cedar-trees growing on the Foot Hills in great profusion—and these smelt very fragrant whenever a fresh log was thrown on. It was as light as day. Everything that stood at all upright was defined by monstrous black shadows, that might have stood for the shape of some unknown monster of the woods; even E.'s homely buggy looked in its shadow like an enormous crouching animal, perchance Bruin himself. And the horses were so uneasy, that there was evidently something prowling round—and I was the only person awake. I got up and threw fresh logs on; there was a horrible fascination to me in it all. I felt I must have some one else to share my vigil, so I awoke E. To my astonishment she did not seem at all impressed, but murmured, "Oh, bother, go to sleep," and turned over on her side. And presently, although I had intended to keep watch all night for the unknown horror I felt sure was not far from camp, I too succumbed and did not wake till morning. We started on our berry-picking much later that day, and were well in the middle of it when an exclamation from one of the girls called us to her, and when she pointed to a sort of cave under an overhanging ledge of rock, we saw in the

soft sand an impression of some heavy creature's sleeping form, and of four clearly defined claws.

"Bear," said E. laconically, but otherwise she did not seem to mind much; adding that she "concluded we were going home, so it did not matter." But for me the joy of the berry-picking was over, and I was very thankful when we struck camp and started early in the afternoon. It was time, too, for some dull, heavy-looking clouds were hanging over Pike's Peak, in the distance, and the weatherwise amongst our party foretold one of the rare summer storms, so that I was doubly anxious to get home, as I knew I must ride part of the way by myself. E. and I started together and she whipped up old Nell with much promptitude, for she did not much like the look of the weather. But Nell was far too accustomed to go her own pace to be properly impressed by her mistress's anxiety. She merely twitched her ears angrily as the lash flicked them, and then turned her blinkerless head round and looked at E., more, in sorrow that E. should so far forget what was due to her horse, than anger, and then calmly took her own pace up the Divide again.

As we got on the ridge of it the storm burst out. I say burst out, for without any other warning the clouds rent apart, and a great sheet of water fell down upon us. Keeping dry was out of the question; the rain filled up the buggy, our feet were over the ankles in a pool of water; it was just hopeless to drive on, we had to stand still and let the storm do its worst upon us. The thunder crashed above our heads, and as for the lightning, the way it lit the scene up, ran along the wire of the telegraph posts, and played round the brass of the harness, was something awful to witness. Such a pale blue, evil-looking flame as it was, too, whilst the whole air felt charged with electricity.

But the storm was over almost as suddenly as it came; the sun shone out again bright and warm. We dried ourselves as well as we could; all the bedding was soaked, of course, but as we were going home that did not matter much. As for the raspberries they were all tightly shut up in tin lunch pails, so they were safe. Then we baled out the bottom of the buggy with the tin dipper, and started off again.

But E. still prophesied more storm, and as we parted company on the ridge of the Divide, advised me to get home as quickly as I could, and not to lose my track, as

very likely I should find some fresh "wash-outs" on the way. I waved my hand in reply, and Rory and I loped away downhill; I nursing carefully a five-pound pail of raspberries in my lap, as I was determined the boys should have some stewed fruit for supper.

But alas! E.'s prediction turned out only too true; part of the track had been washed away and I had to make what I thought a small detour in consequence. Now, the prairie has a peculiar formation; it looks as if an ocean of Atlantic billows had been suddenly petrified, the bluffs standing for the waves, and each being mountainously like the other. Moreover, it was growing dusk, the swift-falling dusk of the great West, and by some unlucky chance I missed the right bluff, and when I thought I should strike the track again there was no track to be seen. With a vague idea, a very foolish one, too, that I could see better if I dismounted, I got off Rory and peered around, needless to say with no greater success. I then resolved to mount again, but this was easier said than done, with my pailful of berries, to which I still clung womanfully. However, the feat was at last accomplished, and then I am ashamed to say that I wept bitterly, and let Rory wander to and fro at his own sweet will. From this refreshment—and indeed it did me a great deal of good—I was aroused by the sound of horse's hoofs thudding down the bluff behind me. I was frightened at first, thinking it might alarm Rory, but with intense thankfulness I perceived a red-hot spark in front of it; the horse had a rider, and I gave voice to what sounded, even to myself, a very quavering and weak cattle cry.

The rider reined up short beside me with "Great Scot"—only the word was not great Scot—"if it ain't a gal!" I cannot even now say how comforted I felt at hearing that oath—I hope the recording angel has wiped it away from my friend's record long ago—or how thankful I was to be in his company when the storm broke out once more, and he sheltered me as best he could. But for a cow-boy he was strangely silent, and it was so dark that I could not see him even, only the lightning lit up his face for a moment and I caught sight of a jagged scar high up on his left cheekbone. Well, whatever his sins, he was kind enough to me and piloted me to the Santa Fè track, but when I asked him to come in and rest he gave a grim sort of chuckle and said, "Guess not, thanks," and

with a lift of his hat he 'loped off in the direction of Poncha.

How glad I was to see the firelight gleaming through the kitchen window, and the boys were as glad to see me home. The dear fellows had got a nice-supper all ready, and had even made a fresh pie for me; and bar the paste it really was very good. But to my surprise, supper over, instead of wanting to hear my adventures they were full of their own. I think I mentioned in the beginning of this paper that some of our cattle had gone with others of our neighbours' to pasture in one of the mountain parks, and it appeared that although the park had not been pre-empted, and therefore belonged properly to no one, yet there were some cattle-men, who bore a very bad name, who had chosen to consider it their peculiar property, although it was really "no man's land." Out of revenge, instead of driving the cattle off, they had cowardly poisoned the "salt licks" which had been left for them, and one of the neighbours, going up to give a look to the outfit, had found several of the poor brutes in great agony, whilst others were lying dead by the side of the creek, where they had rushed to assuage the burning thirst given them by the poison. Several of our cow-brutes had been killed, and the boys were half mad with indignation, and I felt my blood boil within me, too, as Jim Sanborn, who was staying to supper, described the sufferings of the poor animals. And they all seemed sure that the perpetrator of this cruel act was one Steve Flach.

"Tell you what, boys," declared Jim, "of that varmint has hidden himself, he will make tracks for the depôt before long. Great Scot! ef we could catch him I reckon all the boys in Detton County would let daylight into him, an' no mistake. One could tell him anywhere by that cross-cut scar on his cheek, the beauty. It's lucky the girls didn't come across him berrying, for he passed Genesis Ranch we know."

"He made tracks across the Divide and boarded the cars at Poncha," growled Jack, as he drank his sixth cup of coffee.

And I, I kept silent, kept silent till now. For had I not seen upon the face of the man who had succoured me in that dreadful storm a livid cross-cut scar, high up upon his left cheekbone? And, although I felt that I had in this case done wrong and lied by implication, I am not sure I would not do it still if it had all to come over again.

GREAT MASTERS AT WORK.

BETWEEN the seasons, when winter is taking a hesitating leave, and spring has hardly made up her mind to come in, is the time above all others for forming the acquaintance, or renewing it, with public galleries, museums, and institutions of that kind. The stir of revival that nature experiences at this season has a kind of reflex action on our spirits, and disposes us to deeds of enterprise; but prudence bids us not go far afield or venture beyond the regions of cabs, and omnibuses, and underground railways. There is light, too, without glare, and the Cimmerian gloom of the foggy days of winter is replaced by a pleasant alternation of sunshine and shade.

Under such circumstances it is pleasant to hear of something new in the way of a gratis exhibition, and general thanks are due to the director and staff of the Print-room in the British Museum, for the arrangement in the public gallery of a very fine collection of studies and drawings of the great masters of the various foreign schools. Even apart from their artistic value, there is a strong interest attaching to these relics of the mighty spirits of old. Through what chances and changes must some of these old sketches have passed from the moment they were hastily dashed in to seize some passing expression or varying attitude, to that of their present appearance, neatly mounted and labelled in a London gallery! There is something, too, of the marvellous about the origin of this assemblage of designs and studies, the greater part of which belong to the collection of the late Mr. John Malcolm of Poltalloch, and have been lent for exhibition by his executors. Fancy Raphael, Da Vinci, Titian wandering in the Highlands, which when they lived were almost an unknown land!

As to what manner of man was the artist of the early Italian schools, we may form an idea from the very first drawing in the collection by Masaccio, one of the early Fathers of modern art, whose works are as rare as they are precious. Here we have a painter absorbed in his work, squatted on a rude bench, and dressed anyhow, in Phrygian bonnet with a heavy fringe coming down so as to shade the eyes, and a doublet and hose of no particular hue or texture. The swell artist had not yet made his appearance, although

he came later on, for the great artists did not long rub shoulders with Popes and Princes, and the high and mighty in general, without acquiring some taste for show and splendour. But the artist in cowl and frock is more characteristic of the period, such as Fra Angelico, who gives us drawings of saintly figures, and Fra Bartolommeo, later the friend of Savonarola and the sharer of his exalted visions, in whose studio work this collection is very rich.

These men devoted their art to the service of religion; but what a different kind of brother was Fra Filippo Lippi, rather corresponding with the notion of him who "laughs ha ha!" and quaffs to the same effect than to the ascetic type of artist. It was he who carried off from her convent the beautiful Lucrezia, and a son Filippino—to prove even a better artist than his father—blessed the irregular union. According to received notions of discipline among religious orders, here was a matter for the walling up of the culprits within

Two niches, narrow, deep, and tall,

as in the well-known case described in "Marmion." But our lovers came off better than might have been expected. The Pope relieved the pair from their vows and blessed their union, although it is said that unforgiving relatives of the damsel who held the family dishonoured by the connexion, satisfied poetic justice by giving the artist a dose of poison which carried him off in the prime of life. But the son lived to be a great artist, and some of his sketches adorn the walls of this gallery.

Filippino's great master Boticelli is also here represented in a fine drawing of "Abundance"—a woman, tall and fair and richly dressed, surrounded by jolly, happy children; and very happy and jolly must have been the children of that period, if they were really as we see them through the eyes of the great masters. For that is one of the great charms of such a collection that one gets a glimpse of the real human beings of past ages, through eyes that are of greater power and compass than our own; while in the case of finished pictures we get idealised compositions, reduced or elevated as the case may be to the dimensions of things in general.

Nor are there wanting in these sketches suggestions of the varied incidents of an artist's life. There are two sketches by Gentile Bellini—a Turkish soldier in a peaked hat, suggesting in shape the

grenadier caps of Dettingen and Fontenoy; and a Turkish woman, handsome but wern, unveiled and wearing a curious peaked headdress, like the witch's hat of our old prints. These no doubt were taken at Constantinople not very long after its capture by the Ottomans. The soldier himself might be one of those who swarmed over the wall of the golden city. The bullet of his musket may have found its billet in the heart of the last of the emperors of New Rome. The new master of the city, the great Mohammed the Second, had something of a taste for art, superior to that of the effete old Byzantine world, and he requested the Venetian senate, always the friends of those at the winning end of the broomhandle, to send him an artist of the best. Perhaps they thought they could best spare Bellini, who was originally of Padua, or his spirit may have been unusually adventurous; anyhow, he sailed for Constantinople in a Venetian galley, and was courteously received by the Sultan, to whom he exhibited some of his works, among others a "Head of John the Baptist on a charger," which he naturally thought would suit his highness's taste. The Sultan was a connoisseur in heads, and shook his own a little. The Baptist's head, he objected, showed a portion of neck, which does not appear under such circumstances, and to show the artist what he meant he called in the executioner, and bade him strike off the head of an unhappy slave. The spectacle was too realistic even for an impassioned artist, and Bellini retired horror-struck and sickened, and determined to return home as soon as he conveniently could.

Here, too, we have a fine drawing of a head by an artist whose fame was eclipsed by Raphael, and whose existing works hardly justify the high estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries. But the drawing shows the power of a great master, and such undoubtedly was Il Sodomo—a hot-headed, reckless genius, a friend of Princes and ennobled by Pope and Emperor, but who has left little to posterity worthy of his great powers. And this brings us to Raphael himself, who is always great, and whose sweet-eyed, serious Madonna appears in her original model, a soft, demure, perhaps a little too demure, but thoroughly loveable maid. But the museum was already rich in Raphael's drawings, and the Malcolm collection does not add anything very important.

There is a beautiful drawing of an earlier

master, Andrea Mantegna, the author of the famous "Triumph" which is to be seen at Hampton Court. In this it is a lovely woman, who does not stoop to Folly, but walks, open-eyed yet seeing nothing, to the verge of destruction, led on by "friendly" hands of young men in a similar predicament as to powers of vision, while Folly enthroned cracks his fat sides in cynic mirth.

Another fine drawing, the "Finding of the Cross by the Empress Helena," is by Peruzzi, and its architectural background reminds us that the master was equally great in the composition of buildings as of pictures. A noticeable incident in this artist's career was the sack of Rome in 1527, when he was not only plundered of all his goods by the Imperial soldiers, but forced, as ransom for his person, to paint a post-mortem portrait of the Constable Bourbon, who was killed in the assault, by no less a hand than that of Benvenuto Cellini, if we are to believe that great but somewhat boastful person's autobiography.

Nor is great Titian without representative sketches here, chiefly studies for backgrounds, which show a fine feeling for trees and rivers and rocky mountains; and Da Vinci is seen at work in a scratchy, tentative way. One of the wonders of such a collection, indeed, is how they—the great masters—worked with anything that came to hand: with crayon, chalk, charcoal, sepia, Indian ink, charcoal or silver point. They model you a hand or arm or whole figure from the life with as much apparent ease and certainty as a baker moulds a loaf; nor have they any care as to how they arrive at the result—a wash, a rub, a scratch, does the business—the light of heaven shines in a smear of chalk and the darkness of the inferno is revealed in a smudge of ink. Probably because they served a long and hard apprenticeship, had grown up in studios and workshops, had been licked with the mahletick and had paint-pots thrown at their heads, did they acquire this easy, infallible method of theirs. Not that this explains the whole of the mystery, but it may go part of the way.

But when we come to the French school we are on artistic terra firma. How clever and cold is Clonet in his portrait of Mary of Lorraine, Queen and Regent of Scotland, and mother of Mary of Scots. Here, too, are delightful landscapes by the great Claude, one, especially, of a bridge and trees, suffused with light and full of at-

mosphere, and yet in the simplest of mediums. But it would take a lifetime to learn his secret. Even Turner never quite attained it, although he may in other respects have surpassed his master.

With the men of Flanders, too, we make acquaintance—with their burgomasters, and knights of quality, and their buxom, solid "Graces," and the Dutch with their boats and barges,

The slow canal and yellow blossomed vale,

wharves and street scenes, and the general amphibiousness of the natives. Or we may drink our fill in pot-houses with Van Ostade, play skittles and bowls, or flirt with the stout peasant girls or burghers' daughters. And there are the stalls of the dealers in game, in fish, and in fruit; marvellous drawings by Frans Snyders, with fighting cocks that are more beak and feathers than pen and ink, and a hound sniffing at the ears of a slaughtered deer that is a marvel of expression.

And we have Peter Paul Rubens, too, showing his force, not in too solid flesh, but in charming landscape. There is a sketch of a river and distant hills that one would swear to as a scene on the Wey not far from Guildford; a village green with old barns about it and cottages, that looks remarkably like Worpleston Green in the same neighbourhood; and a moated grange that is strong of Lincolnshire or east Yorkshire. Yet although Peter Paul was in England in 1630, and was then knighted by Charles the First, still it was on a diplomatic mission, and it is hardly likely that he had time to wander around with his sketch-book.

Another distinguished sketcher is Van Dyck, who gives us a beautiful landscape study of an English lane, soft and sweet with all richness of sward and foliage, such a lane as we may still chance upon in some lucky ramble, as did the great Sir Antonio in the days when Charles the First was king. And he is not the only artist who shows in an unexpected light. To turn to the German wall, who is Adam Elsheimer, who shows such charming landscape studies of country round about Rome and Frankfurt? The very same who painted martyrdoms in miniature for the cabinets of the rich and devout, when the seventeenth century was still young. And there is Albert Durer, too, our old friend whom we acknowledge at once in the old horse, all skin and bone, ridden by Death, so grim and old and shaky; but we have him also

in the mediæval city perched up on the hill, its gateways, battlements, and peaked turrets, and the old place seems to come before us as in a dream, with the soft clamour of the bells and the tangle of noises from all the workers and craftsmen, and the brabble of voices that hardly ceases by night or day.

In contrast with this, how quiet is our great city of to-day, noisy enough with its traffic, but when that is out of hearing almost as silent as the grave. And in this gallery, in a remote corner of the Museum, the quietude is almost oppressive. Not many people have found their way here yet, and it is a way that is not too easy to find, and that fetches a sudden turn among honest British pots and pannikins that throws not a few off the line. And to have finger-posts here and there, "This way to the Drawings," might be deemed a slight upon the more permanent attractions of the establishment.

But people drift in as the morning goes on, girls and their sweethearts, Harry and Arabella, who laugh consumedly, and waltz round when nobody is looking. Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins, too, out for a holiday, and in behaviour quite dignified as becomes people who own a pony and cart. In fact, Mr. Hawkins finds the place a little too free for him, and complains that "these here old toffs weren't too perticler of what they made picters of." Then comes a connoisseur and his friend, who each gloat upon beauties that the other does not see. And they rapidly rattle through the stand of engravings rich in examples of Marc Antonio, "the finest things in the world," says a collector with enthusiasm, but gnashes his teeth as he finds some that he covets and can't get. Nobody wants to run away with pictures in their great gilt frames, but a rare engraving must be a great trial to a conscientious collector.

But here are some small connoisseurs in patched and particoloured skirts and knickers, a little group of youngsters sent here by a careful mother to be out of mischief; the place is rife with such bands of urchins on Saturdays when schools are closed. And these little urchins find the swinging frames of the stand of engravings a capital plaything. They had not counted on anything so amusing, and at it they go, playing at a circus, probably; till a policeman hears the clatter and comes up. The policeman of the future will take the children by the hand, and explain the

technique of engraving, will discourse on different states, will explain how such an engraving "with the fir-trees" may be of priceless value, and worth nothing without, or vice versa, and what a charm there is in an imperfection if it only be unique. And those children will go home, and perhaps become great engravers like Robetta; or the Mantegnas, skilful with brush and burin; or Campagnola; or the famous master of the Rat Trap. But we have not got so far as that yet, and the policeman of to-day contents himself with a laconic admonition to "cut it." And they cut it accordingly, their little hob-nailed boots clanging over the polished floor. And we also will cut it.

ANTARCTICA.

IN geographical circles generally, and in those of London and of Scotland particularly, the subject of the renewal of Antarctic exploration is being eagerly discussed. To some extent the experimental voyages of the three Dundee whalers last year are to be credited with this revival of interest in the unknown regions of the South Pole, but, in fact, it is held as a scientific reproach that these regions are unknown. Then, again, there are so few worlds left to conquer in a geographical sense that we, as a nation, cannot afford to be backward. As far as the Arctic regions are concerned, we have done practically nothing since the Nares expedition managed to drag over the ice a few miles nearer to the North Pole than any of their predecessors—and then came back sooner than was expected. But in the Arctic regions there is not much room for anybody until Dr. Nansen has had his chance; and in Antarctica there is unlimited scope for observation and discovery, because little has yet been seen, and less discovered.

It is not England alone that is concerned just now about the Antarctic regions. The Norwegians are bent on testing the value of the fishing grounds there, and though some whalers they sent south last year were not very successful, it is said that renewed efforts on a larger scale are about to be made. For the Americans the southern whaling and sealing waters have always had attractions, and the American Geographical Society is now organising a regular scientific expedition. The chief promoter is Dr. Frederick Cook, who

accompanied the Peary expedition to the Arctic. It is not to be on a very extensive scale. Dr. Cook proposes to buy a steam-whaler of about three hundred tons, to provision her for three years, and to start on the first of September next for the South Shetland Islands. He will call at the Falkland Islands to fill up with coal, and steaming south will enter the first practicable opening in the pack. His idea is to reach land before the winter begins, and then to pursue the work of exploration with dog-sledges. A large life-boat is to be taken, in which, should the vessel be lost among the ice, the party can return either to South America or the Falkland Islands. The expedition will only number some twelve or fourteen persons, all told, and is estimated to cost ten thousand pounds, which does not seem a great deal for the purpose.

But why is it that we know so much less of the Antarctic than of the Arctic? How is it that while scores of expeditions, year after year and century after century, have gone to wrest, or to try to wrest, the secret of the Northern icy circle, one might almost number on one hand all the organised explorations that have been undertaken in the Southern icy circle?

Well, one reason is that the Arctic has not always been wooed for itself, but as a means to an end. Men have gone thither more often to find a passage by the north-west, or by the north-east, to Asia and India, than to find the North Pole. Then, too, the Arctic circle is reputedly more habitable and hospitable than the Antarctic, and the cold is not so intense—at least, so it has been generally supposed, although there seems now some reason to doubt the superior inclemency and rigour of the Antarctic. The Arctic is certainly richer in animal and vegetable life—even up to the farthest limits yet reached—than the Antarctic has been found to be in not the remotest parallels. In the Arctic a summer sun does penetrate the frozen recesses, and makes genial for a brief period the home of the walrus and the Polar bear. But in the Antarctic there is no summer sun, no thawing of fiords and smiling of Arctic verdure.

It is a region of Eternal Winter and of unmelting snow, where—so far as is known—not a single plant finds life within the inner circle, and where never a living creature roams. The zoologist is not drawn to the Southern Circle as he is to the Northern, and yet the attractions for him are great

because they have all the charm of the unknown. It is believed that only a few of the hardest birds build in a few of the sheltered corners of the inner Antarctic; but who knows? Who can say that deep within those awful solitudes may not be revealed the mystery of the life of the fur seal when he vanishes from the waters of the North Pacific? Or that on some Antarctic continent or island may not be found the priceless remnant of the Great Auk tribe? We know not, at any rate, what riches or poverty may be there until we go to see. And nobody has yet gone to see—beyond the fringe.

It is a curious fact that no one has ever wintered within the Antarctic, many as have been the expeditions and ships' companies which, compulsorily or voluntarily, have wintered in the Arctic. There has been no need to do so, for there has been no possible goal beyond, such as India, which first led our mariners into the Arctic; no scientific romance such as has characterised the quest for the Northern Pole.

And yet another thing differentiates the Arctic from the Antarctic. In the North there is—unless Dr. Nansen is grievously mistaken—a pole surrounded by water. In the South there is a pole surrounded by land—a Polar basin as opposed to a Polar continent. While the books and essays, the theories and journals, which have been published concerning the Arctic regions would fill a library, a handful of volumes contains all that has ever been printed of records in the Antarctic. Let us take a brief look at some of these.

"When we cast a retrospective glance at the history of knowledge concerning our planet," said Dr. John Murray, of the "Challenger" expedition, in a recent address to the Royal Geographical Society, "we find that nearly all the great advances in geography took place among commercial, and in a very special manner among maritime, peoples. Whenever primitive races commenced to look upon the ocean, not as a terrible barrier separating lands, but rather as a means of communication between distant countries, they soon acquired increased wealth and power, and beheld the dawn of new ideas and great discoveries. Down even to our own day the power and progress of nations may, in a sense, be measured by the extent to which their seamen have been able to brave the many perils, and their learned men have been able to unravel the many

riddles, of the great ocean. The history of civilisation runs parallel with the history of navigation in all its wider aspects."

We do not find that the mariners of Prince Henry the Navigator, of Portugal, penetrated to the Antarctic, although they were the first Europeans to double the Cape of Good Hope; but not long after Columbus discovered America, Vespucci announced the discovery of a new world in the Southern Hemisphere. It is said that the first expedition to the South Polar regions was despatched from Peru. Governor Mendaña, in 1567, despatched his nephew to look for "Terra Australis Incognita," which he did not find. A Dutchman, named Dirk Garritz, discovered what are now known as the South Shetlands in 1598; a Frenchman discovered the island of South Georgia in 1675; and another Frenchman, Kerguelen, in 1772 discovered what he at first believed to be a mountainous Southern continent, but afterwards found to be only a barren island, which now bears his name.

In point of fact, the first navigator to do any real work in the Antarctic was our own Captain Cook. When he went out on his first two voyages, the maps were filled up with imaginary continents bearing a variety of fancy names. But on his first voyage Cook demonstrated New Zealand to be an island, and that if there was any Southern continent it did not extend as far north as the fortieth southern parallel. On his second voyage he reached the seventy-first parallel, and proved that if there is any continent it must be within the Antarctic Circle amid eternal ice. He believed, however, that a tract of land within the circle extended to the South Pole, and projected further north in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans than elsewhere; and that this land would be always inaccessible because of the ice. "The risk one runs," he said, "in exploring a coast in these unknown and icy seas is so very great that I can be bold enough to say that no man will ever venture farther than I have done, and that the lands which may lie to the south will never be explored. Thick fogs, snowstorms, intense cold, and every other thing that can render navigation dangerous, must be encountered, and these difficulties are greatly heightened by the inexpressibly horrid aspect of the country. A country doomed by nature never once to feel the warmth of the sun's rays, but to lie buried in everlasting snow and ice. The ports which may be on the

coast are, in a manner, wholly filled up with frozen snow of vast thickness; but if any should be so far open as to invite a ship into it, she would run a risk of being fixed there for ever, or of coming out in an ice-land. The islands and floats on the coast, the great falls from the ice-cliffs in the port, or a heavy snowstorm attended with a sharp frost, would be equally fatal."

This is a dismal picture, not worse, perhaps, than has been presented by some others; but Cook was wrong in his prognostications, for other navigators have penetrated further south than he did.

True, they are few in number, and have not added greatly to the sum of our knowledge, except, of course, the renowned Sir James Clark Ross. The reader may like to have the following records of the highest latitudes reached in the South Polar Circle, to refer to now when exploration is being resumed:

| | | | |
|-------|---------------|---------|------------|
| 1774. | Cook | reached | 71° 15' S. |
| 1821. | Bellinghausen | " | 69° 30' " |
| 1821. | " | " | 70° 0' " |
| 1823. | Weddell | " | 74° 15' " |
| 1839. | Wilkes | " | 70° 0' " |
| 1841. | Ross | " | 78° 4' " |
| 1842. | " | " | 78° 11' " |
| 1843. | " | " | 71° 33' " |

From this it will be seen that Sir James Ross has out-distanced all other explorers in these regions. His chief object was to make magnetic observations. He had previously "spotted" the north magnetic pole, and he sailed within one hundred and sixty miles of the south magnetic pole. He took soundings and temperatures, and reported on the sea-creatures observed.

Three times Ross crossed the Antarctic Circle, and on one of these voyages he discovered and named Victoria Land, a vast mountainous tract extending to the seventy-eighth parallel, and in the longitude of New Zealand—a range of mountains rising to a height of fifteen thousand feet, terminating in the volcanic cones of Mounts Erebus and Terror. But where in other lands there would be indentations and harbours, there the glaciers fill up the valleys, and stretching far into the sea, form icy headlands from which huge bergs are constantly being detached.

At the foot of Mount Terror was found a perpendicular ice-cliff rising to a height of two hundred feet, which was followed for a distance of three hundred miles without a break being seen. "To the north-westward," he wrote, "we observed a low point of land, with a small islet off it, which we hoped might afford

us a place of refuge during the winter, and accordingly endeavoured to struggle through the ice towards it until four p.m., when the utter hopelessness of being able to approach it was manifest to all, the space of fifteen or sixteen miles between it and the ships being now filled up by a solid mass of land-ice. Had it been possible to have found a place of security upon any part of this coast, where we might have wintered in sight of the brilliant burning mountain, and at so short a distance from the magnetic pole, both of these interesting spots might easily have been reached by travelling parties in the following spring." But "it was painfully vexatious to behold at an easily accessible distance, under other circumstances, the range of mountains in which the pole is placed, and to feel how nearly the chief object of our undertaking had been accomplished; and few can understand the deep feelings of regret with which I felt myself compelled to abandon the perhaps too ambitious hope I had so long cherished of being permitted to plant the flag of my country on both the magnetic poles of the earth."

That was fifty years ago, and no one has gone so far since. It is now generally believed that had Ross been provided with a steamer instead of a sailing-vessel, he would have successfully carried out his design. The "Challenger" is, we believe, the only steamer that has crossed the Antarctic Circle, but she was not constructed for work among the ice, and could not proceed far. Dr. Murray, however, who was with the expedition and has given much attention to Antarctic phenomena, is satisfied, from the evidence, that there exists within the South Polar area a vast tract of continental land, of probably about four millions of square miles in area; and that there is a chain of active and extinct volcanic cones forming a continuation of the great volcanic chain that more or less surrounds the whole Pacific.

The formation of icebergs has been graphically described by Dr. Murray. The huge glaciers above mentioned project more and more into the sea until, when a depth of some three hundred or four hundred fathoms is reached, they break off in great masses one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet above the sea, and sometimes several miles along. These ice-islands coursing about the Antarctic Sea come into violent collision with each other, and the broken fragments mixing with salt water, ice, and snow, form what is known as pack-ice, which is the

great obstacle to navigation. The waves dash against the steep sides of the ice islands and cut them into caves, and gullies and ledges, in which the sea-birds swarm. Then, as they drift with wind and current towards the north, they become worn, tilt, and turn over, and split up into the pinnacled bergs familiar to the voyager in southern waters as in the North Atlantic. Deep in their icy recesses they carry the boulders and earth of the Antarctic region to deposit on the ocean floor of warmer climes as they melt.

The predominating winds in Antarctica are southerly and south-easterly. And it is the effect of the annual snowfall and evaporation there in relation to these winds, that makes Antarctic observation so necessary to a right understanding of the meteorology of the whole globe.

The last visitors to this remote and inhospitable region were the Dundee whalers of last year, and they, like their predecessors, found it a region of gales and calms, of wet fogs and blinding snow, but with alternations of charming weather. Mr. Bruce, who accompanied the expedition as naturalist, presented the following picture to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society:

"Long shall I remember the Christmas Eve when we were fast anchored to a floe. There was a perfect calm; the sky, except at the horizon, had a dense canopy of cumulus clouds, which rested on the summits of the western hills; and when the sun was just below the horizon, the soft greys and blues of the clouds, and the spotless whiteness of the ice as it floated in the black and glassy sea, were tinted with the most delicate of colours—rich purples and rosy hues, blues and greens, passing into translucent yellows. At midnight, the solitude was grand and impressive, perhaps the more so since we had for well-nigh a week been drifting among bergs with dense fogs and very squally weather. No sound disturbed the silence; at times a flock of the beautiful sheath-bills would hover round the vessel, fanning the limpid air with their soundless wings of creamy whiteness. All was in such unison, all in such perfect harmony; but it was a passing charm."

This was in midsummer, for December in the Antarctic corresponds with June in the Arctic, and the variations of temperature were found less than in London. But the gales were sometimes terrific, even in summer, and once for ten hours the vessel

steamed as hard as possible against the wind and only made one knot. How Cook and Ross managed without steam is marvellous.

Much has been said about the severity of Antarctic cold, but Mr. Bruce concludes from his observations that the difference between the summer and the winter temperature in Antarctica is not so great as in the North. Of course, no one has ever yet spent a winter within the Antarctic Circle, and this is only surmise, but it is based on scientific premises.

Dr. Donald, who also accompanied this expedition, gives the following description of another Antarctic phenomenon—the fog. "The fogs are frequent enough and dense enough to be very troublesome; yet they have a peculiar beauty of their own. In the morning, as a bright sun begins to dispel the fog, there first appears a 'fog-bow,' or as the sailors call it, a 'fog-schaffer' or 'scavenger'—their belief being that this bow eats up or removes the fog. It is in the form of a perfect circle, the two ends appearing to meet beneath one's feet. Soon after this, luminous points appear in the fog, and gradually extend into patches. I have counted as many as twenty of these. As the fog lifts a little more, each of these patches is seen to be suspended immediately above an iceberg. Then the fog finally disperses with a rush, leaving a bright sun and a cloudless sky, and every promise of a magnificent Antarctic day. Many of the fogs, however, do not disperse in this accommodating way, and may last for days."

Antarctica is poverty-stricken in the way of fauna and flora, but is rich in scientific interest, and the Royal Geographical Society are now moving towards organising a national expedition for prolonged observation in a thorough manner. At a recent meeting of the Society there was a great gathering of renowned Arctic travellers and navigators, and scientists of fame, who entered into the project with enthusiasm.

The land of Antarctica is barren, but all over the floor of the Antarctic Ocean, says Dr. Murray, of the "Challenger," there is a most abundant fauna, apparently more abundant and more peculiar than in any other region of the ocean's bed. More knowledge is needed on this point by biologists, while meteorology is interested in the matter of the winds and temperature, to which we have already referred. The theory of ocean currents has to be tested not merely by such exploits as Dr. Nansen

has undertaken in the North, but by what we have yet to discover in the South. Then as to physiography, Professor Neumayer, the celebrated German scientist, says: "It is certain that without an examination and a survey of the magnetic properties of the Antarctic regions, it is utterly hopeless to strive, with prospects of success, at the advancement of the theory of the earth's magnetism."

The proper objects of the contemplated expedition are thus formulated by Dr. Murray. To determine the nature and extent of the Antarctic continent; to penetrate into the interior; to ascertain the depth and nature of the ice-cap; to observe the character of the underlying rocks and their fossils; to take magnetical and meteorological observations, both at sea and on land; to observe the temperature of the ocean at all depths and seasons of the year; to take pendulum observations on land, and possibly also to make gravity observations at great depths in the ocean; to bore through the deposits on the floor of the ocean to ascertain the condition of the deeper layers; to sound, trawl, and dredge, and study the character and distribution of marine organisms.

This is a large order, but it is necessary of execution for the definite determination of land and water on our planet; for the solution of many problems concerning the Ice Age; for the better determination of the internal constitution and superficial form of the earth; for a more complete knowledge of the laws which govern the motions of the atmosphere and seas; and for authoritative indications as to the origin of terrestrial and marine plants and animals.

It is not a dash for the South Pole that is advocated, for indeed little is expected to be gained by attaining that particular point. It is a "steady, continuous, laborious, and systematic exploration of the whole southern region with all the appliances of the modern investigator."

How is it to be gone about? Two steamers of a thousand tons or so will suffice, and they should be fitted out for a stay over three summers and two winters; the party being divided at suitable spots for winter observations. After landing the winter parties, the ships, it is intended, will—to escape being frozen in—steam to the north and continue marine observations along the outer margins of the ice. If necessary they can run to Australia or the Falklands to refit, and return with

supplies for the second winter. The wintering parties, it is proposed, should be composed solely of civilian scientists and explorers. The results of such an expedition will be of enormous value to the science of the world, and of special importance to Great Britain.

A CORSICAN AFFAIR.

A COMPLETE STORY.

I.

ANTONIO FORLI was certainly dying. The sweat on his face and his difficult breathing told of it quite as much as the prayers of the priest, who every now and again came to a pause and lowered his head so that he could look over his spectacles at the sick man.

Forli's wife and his son Cesare were also in the room.

The former's sobs were continuous. She was on her knees by her husband's bedside, holding the crucifix as the priest had directed her, and at each pause in his reverence's petitions she broke out into ejaculations of startling energy. One of her cries seemed to bring sudden vitality into the sallow, pinched face of the dying man.

"By the Virgin and San Antonio," she screamed, "have we not suffered enough wrong—we Forli! Let there be a blood reckoning between the Leonetti and us. Oh, my poor, handsome husband, see to it when thou art in Paradise."

"Chut! chut!" interposed the priest quickly. "Remember, woman, that he has been anointed. The time for such thoughts has passed."

But Antonio himself did not seem to think so. Wreathing himself up so that his back fell against the wall, he opened his mouth as if to speak, and waved a weak hand towards his son Cesare.

"Come to thy father, son," said the woman with apparent acerbity.

Cesare Forli was but sixteen, though he had the muscles and stature of a man, and also the firm expression of a man on his dark face. He was Corsican to the toe-tips.

Again the priest tried to interfere.

"The Holy Mother," he exclaimed, "likes not such compacts. Be advised. Let earthly dissensions be forgotten, and give thyself wholly to God."

"May I be forgotten of God if I do!"

said the sick man in a cavernous voice that sounded very grim. There was a flash in his dark eyes as he spoke. Then he turned to his son.

"I am going," he said, and it was as if he pitied himself; his wife's moans broke out afresh. "I am going, my son. But there is work for thee. Speed to the Sartene province of Corsica—ah! the dear land, I die exiled from it!—and there kill first Giovanni Leonetti. Shoot him in the back as he shot thy dear brother who is in Heaven. And afterwards kill all the other Leonetti in the land—like rats."

"I command you!" cried the priest. "This is infamy."

But the dying man's voice rose above the priest's.

"It is not infamy, it is duty. See to it, Cesare. Place thy hand on my breast—ah!"

He slid down into the bed again and lay gasping. The lad, without moving a muscle of his countenance, did as his father bade him and stood watching the struggles on his father's face.

"He is going," whispered the priest to the woman.

The latter rose to clasp her husband once more in her arms. But with a final effort the exile opened his mouth to speak.

"Swear," he sobbed, staring at the lad, "swear, or I——"

He could not finish. Even while Cesare was murmuring the words, "I swear it, father," with his right hand still on his father's breast, the man's jaw alighted and his eyes lost their life.

"It is a pity," said the priest, as he blew his nose with a loud report and drew near, "men cannot be sensible in their last moments. But there, it is breath wasted to reproach him now; you Corsicans are all alike. Cesare, I absolve you from your bond to your poor father."

The lad lifted his eyes to the priest, but said nothing.

"Promises of so sacrilegious a kind, extorted by the dying, are not to be kept. In fulfilling them, you do but protract his presence in purgatory. Dost hear me, my son?"

But the woman herself responded. She turned an inflamed face upon the priest.

"Father Correggio!" she said, with terrible earnestness, "may the boy rot in this world and the next, for ever, if he forgets his oath. The living as well as the dead bind him."

The priest shrugged his shoulders, folded his spectacles, put his breviary in his pocket, shook his skirts to make sure they hung freely, shuffled to the corpse and made the sign of the cross on its forehead—with a protesting movement of his own head the while—and then murmuring "Benedicite!" left the room.

"They are devils—those Corsicans!" the good father said to himself as he crossed the threshold.

II.

BARELY a month later young Cesare was in Corsica with his gun. His was a pitiful errand, but he did not seem to think so; neither did his mother, who from the mainland sent prayers and blessings in his wake, and confidently awaited his return with the blood of the clan of the Leonetti on his immature young hands.

In Bastia the lad bought black clothes like the native Corsicans; they went well with his set countenance and fierce eyes. His gun was his father's. It was old, but he believed it would do its work. It had shot men ere this. The experience might be of service to it and Cesare himself.

And so from Bastia Cesare walked down the coast-line to the south, by the vineyards and through the orange groves of many a fertile though rather pestilential little village. He had nothing to do till he got to Porto Vecchio. For a week he could live the life of an honest man, enjoying the good gifts of sunshine and bewitching landscapes without either remorse or forebodings.

From Porto Vecchio he was to strike into the mountains, and lay his snares for the Leonetti, who had their dwellings among the sources of the Stabiaccio.

It was a happy week, this that he spent between the mountains and the blue sea. But at the sight of the walls of Porto Vecchio, he remembered his responsibilities to the uttermost.

Yet another brief respite was allowed him, however.

At the inn where he stayed was a lovely young girl named Caterina. She could not have been more than fifteen, though her large sombre blue eyes had a woman's expression. They twain soon made acquaintance. The girl's mother was taken by Cesare's looks, and would fain have learnt all about him. But, of course, that was impossible. Nevertheless, the three

days the lad spent in this ancient town were enough for both Cesare and Caterina.

"I will come back for you, my angel," said the lad, when on the fourth morning he had shouldered his gun and prepared for his hideous undertaking. "Be true to me."

The girl's eyes answered him sufficiently. But her tongue also bore witness for her.

"Thou hast all my heart, dear Cesare," she whispered.

From early morning until late in the afternoon the lad clambered among the oaks and precipices, wondering how his task would come to him. He was bound for a little village high up. Here he meant to mature his plans, in the very midst of the Leonetti he had come to destroy.

But when it was near sundown, he fell in with a young man hardly older than himself, whose vivacity and gift of persuasion had a strange power over him.

"I am bent on a dark business," he told Cesare. "'Tis no less than bloodshed. We are in vendetta. Will join me?"

Cesare looked thunderstruck.

"I, too, am here in vendetta," he stammered out.

"Good; then let us take an oath of friendship. You help me this afternoon, and then I will do for you what you do for me."

"What is the name of the doomed one?" asked Cesare.

"That," replied the other, "I do not tell thee. Neither am I inquisitive about thy quarrel."

Then the thought flashed to Cesare's mind that it was a Leonetti who was being pursued.

"I am thine," he said, offering his hand.

"And I thine," said the other; and they swore an oath in the matter.

This done, at the bidding of his friend, who said he might be called Carlo, Cesare loaded his gun afresh. Together they then stole by a craggy path towards a highland glen, or rather basin, occupied entirely by a mountain torrent, a few pine-trees, innumerable boulders, and a single black-browed hut.

"He has been away a long time," whispered Carlo; "perhaps he thinks he is forgotten. Ah! he shall be taught differently."

It was arranged that, having crept as near as possible to the house in the dusk, they should lie concealed behind the rocks

until the man came out, or showed in his doorway.

The plan worked only too well.

In less than a quarter of an hour a tall, broad-shouldered man opened the door to look forth.

"It is he!" whispered Carlo; "shoot!"

The victim dropped on the threshold. The two young men did not wait to hear more than one cry from the woman who rushed to the stricken man. They hurried down and down, and drew breath only when they were near the village of Carlo's home.

Here, when the houses showed, Cesare put the question that had of late hovered on his lips:

"Was he a Leonetti?"

The other laughed as he replied:

"Mother of God, no! I am a Leonetti! He was a Forli—the last of them in Corsica."

Cesare was like to faint—at first. He had not been bred in Corsica, and was unused to such shocks. Then he grasped his gun, and, looking Carlo in the face, said:

"I, too, am a Forli."

But Carlo, uplifting his own gun, shouted:

"Remember our bond—we are friends. I have sworn, and you have sworn."

Cesare yielded to the persuasion.

"It is terrible!" he muttered.

Nevertheless, he consented to go home with Carlo, who gave him the name of Pinello to make it possible for him to receive the hospitality of his family.

III.

GIOVANNI LEONETTI lived in the village. He was uncle to Carlo, and a stalwart Corsican to boot. He never moved five steps from his house without his gun—loaded.

Cesare slept little this, his first night in the thick of Corsican feuds. He was thinking of his father, of Caterina, of the man he had shot—his own father's half-brother, as it turned out—and of the vengeance he would sooner or later wreak on young Carlo.

But Giovanni Leonetti was to die first. His mother had told him why, ere he left the mainland. The man had shot her first-born, Angelo, when he was a pretty boy of eight—had shot him as you or I would shoot a partridge. It was not of course from personal enmity, but merely in perpetuation of the traditional feud. Im-

mediately afterwards the police had taken Antonio Forli. Antonio had shot two of them in his successful attempt to escape. And then he and his wife and the little Cesare had evaded the island.

The little Angelo remained unatoned for.

Giovanni Leonetti came and stared at Cesare.

"What is thy business in the mountains?" he asked. Something in the lad's face made him uneasy.

"He has none, uncle," said Carlo, answering for him. "He was lost, and he did us a service in helping to finish off Giacomo Forli."

"Good! then we are friends," replied Giovanni. But if he could have seen the hungry look in Cesare's eyes, when he turned to go, he would have amended his words.

"Be patient," said young Carlo to Cesare; "you have bound me to aid you, I will do it. The afterwards shall take care of itself. Only tarry till his granddaughter comes from the town. Let him see her; they are so fond of each other. Between ourselves, Cesare, I love that girl; but she loves not me, though perhaps she will do it. Let him see her once more, and then we will decide it. There is the family feud, and there is the personal bond. The latter is stronger with the individual, the former with the clan. I would, however, we had never met."

"And I," said Cesare. The lad was perplexed. There were times when his hot blood urged him to take Carlo's life at once. And again there were times when he sobbed to himself that it was impossible he could kill his companion.

For three days this strange life went on. On the fourth day, at noon, when Cesare came in from the mountains, whither he had been roaming with his wild thoughts, Carlo told him the news.

"She has arrived."

"Who?" asked the other.

"Come and see," said Carlo.

They crossed the green village square, with the great chestnut-tree growing in its midst, and approached Giovanni Leonetti's house. Then they entered.

"Good day, cara mia," exclaimed Carlo.

The girl he addressed turned, and Cesare stepped backwards with a thumping heart.

"Caterina!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

It was she, sure enough. But, though she was at first confused, she had the tact

of her sex, and it was not difficult for her to explain to her grandsire her meeting with Cesare as if it were the most trivial matter under the sun. But the spark of jealousy had been struck in Carlo's soul. He saw more than his uncle saw. And when they were outside again he taxed his companion with it.

"Hast said aught of love to that girl, my friend?" he asked.

"What is that to thee?" retorted Cesare, all his pride of family in a flame.

"Good, or rather bad!" rejoined the other. "It makes things simpler, though it will mean the saying of more masses."

There were few words exchanged between the young men that day. Late in the evening, however, Carlo, who had become saturnine in the extreme, called Cesare to the door.

"Let us talk," he said, "under the chestnut-tree. There is a moon. You will not want your gun."

"I trust you," replied Cesare, and together they went out.

Then, with a numbed heart, Cesare listened to Carlo's cold-blooded plan for the shooting of his own uncle. The old man went out early every day to see to his goats. They were to follow him by stealth the next morning. The rest would be easy.

"And afterwards?" suggested Cesare, almost trembling: his thoughts were with Caterina.

"Afterwards—we will see," responded Carlo, and his thoughts also were with Caterina.

They returned to the house in silence, and in silence each went to bed.

The morning opened with mist and rain. But that was nothing. They were used to both in the Corsican highlands. Neither deterred old Giovanni from seeking his goats, gun in hand. And neither kept the two lads from getting on his track and following him over the slippery rocks and wet grass until the opportunity presented itself.

They were close on his heels at length. He had stopped to light his pipe, with his back to them. Carlo gently touched his companion on the shoulder, pointed, and whispered:

"Behold your quarry!"

No shot could have been simpler. In one instant Cesare had his gun extended, and the next the rocks echoed with the report, and old Leonetti lay on his face, shot through the heart.

"Let us see how it has gone," said Carlo quietly.

They turned the old man over. He was dead as Julius Cæsar.

Thrilled with a demoniacal sense of elation, Cesare now offered his hand to his friend—to have it rejected with such scorn as few but Corsicans can express by word and look. Carlo was aboil with passion—for his family's and his own sake.

"That is over," he said hoarsely, referring to their recent friendship. "There is no feud in all Corsica more mortal than ours. Load thy gun."

"But, Carlo——" began the poor lad.

"But nothing. I owe a life for his here"—pointing at his uncle's body—"and another for thy insolence in forestalling me with—with her."

Then Cesare understood. The pride of the Forlì was a good match for the pride of the Leonetti.

Without another word the lad reloaded.

"Ten paces will do," said Carlo, "the signal shall be the croaking of the first raven after we are in station."

These were the last words they exchanged.

For nearly a minute they stood, each with gun levelled at the other's forehead. There was a raven hard by on a withered pine-trunk, but it kept deathly allience for full fifty seconds. At last it croaked.

"Bang!"

The two guns fired simultaneously, and almost simultaneously the two lads fell dead.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

FROM SUNSHINE TO SHADOW.

THE next day the Princess was no longer of the same mind. When everything had been arranged for the walk, and Philip with a beaming countenance had appeared carrying a shawl and a sunshade, Penelope declared that she would rather stay with Mrs. Bethune, and begged the others to leave her. Every one was indignant, for Penelope seemed to take her natural place as queen of the party. Dora could not be comforted, but as Adela accepted Penzie's kind offer to take her place, telling her sister that she must come and entertain Miss De Lucy, there was nothing more to be said. Penelope and Mrs. Bethune watched the party start. Philip with Adela, Dora and Miss De Lucy, Forster and Mr. De Lucy. Philip came back with the trivial excuse that he had forgotten to order his wife's tea, but it was in truth only to whisper to her:

"Shall I stay, dearest? Nothing is nice without you." He, however, only received a chilly refusal.

"Please don't, I shall be happier alone with Mrs. Bethune." Then she returned to Forster's mother, and the two sauntered into the wood near by.

"It is very kind of you to stay with me. Indeed it is. I have been telling Forster that we had better all go back together, and that you must come and stay with us before you go north."

"Thank you, I should like it, but—no, I must not."

"There is Forster making himself agreeable to that Mr. De Lucy," she said, watching the retiring figures. "This rest has quite answered for him; he is much better and more cheerful than he has been of late. I wish he were more like other people."

"Oh, no! don't wish that. He is perfect," said Penzie quickly. "One can believe in him and trust him."

"It is very kind of you to say this. I know I am a partial mother, but I am glad you can appreciate Forster, though being a bride, your husband must be——"

"Philip thinks the same," murmured Penzie, wishing people would not talk of her husband. She tried so hard to forget him.

"Mr. Winskell is a wonderful man himself. If you had been my daughter-in-law, dear Princess, you would have had to hear Mr. Gillbanks's praises often sounded. Forster is so partial to his friends. Has he told you about this dreadful idea of a colony? Lord Rookwood will be made to take it up, and at the bottom of his heart I know he hates colonies."

"Yes. I am almost sure Philip will want to go with him. You would be happier if he did."

"No, no, my dear Princess. Your husband must run no risk. I can't bear to think of Forster out there, but Forster says it is much healthier than the East end of London, and it is only for a year they will want leaders."

"I promise you that Philip shall go with him," said Penelope suddenly.

"No, don't make promises. The poor dear blacks of Africa won't dare to eat up so many men. They do eat men somewhere in Africa, I know, but Forster says he will avoid that district. I wish he

would marry and settle down. Sometimes I can't help thinking he has been in love, but I don't ask much, and he never tells me. I'm so afraid it might be with a poor dear girl without h's. Forster has such queer notions, you know. It seems strange that he is my son."

"When he was a boy did he have these ideas?"

"Yes, he was born with them, I can't think why. They were not inherited, because really I am very sorry for the poor, but I prefer people who wash more, and it is so difficult to help them. Forster won't let me give them money. It all seems such a puzzle, doesn't it?"

So the two women talked on, both happy because of their common topic of interest; but just when the sun was sinking and Mrs. Bethune was beginning to watch for the returning party, the hotel porter came to look for Penelope. He had a telegram in his hand.

Penelope turned pale. It was from her uncle.

"Your father is worse; return at once."
"GREYBARROW."

"I must go and pack up my things. Uncle would not have written that without reason. I have been very happy here. I am very sorry to go." Then she turned back and took Mrs. Bethune's hand. "If I had had a mother like you, I should have been a more useful woman—and a happier one, perhaps."

She did not wait for the answer, but went to her room to pack up her possessions as quickly as possible. Philip found her thus engaged when he came in.

"Dearest, what does this mean?" he asked, for he had not seen Mrs. Bethune. She handed him the telegram.

"I must go at once, you see."

"Of course we must. You are quite right. I shall go and see about a carriage. Give me the time table."

"There is no reason to spoil your holiday, Philip," she said slowly.

"Penzie!" He used her home pet name, but he noticed the frown on her face.

"As you like, but my father has never made up his mind to your presence."

Philip did not answer but went to his own room, and silently packed his things. Then they both went down to table-d'hôte dinner. Penelope saw that Forster was sitting next to Miss De Lucy, and that he was talking to her. It was better she should go and see him no more. It could

make no real difference to her, but she liked watching his face and hearing him talk. She liked it even though these hours of pleasure gave her some bitter pangs of conscience. Philip, who ought to have been everything to her, only repelled her. But she must have him with her always, always!

When she spoke this evening, it was in her old haughty manner, and Dora was in despair, for she had fancied that Penelope had become like other people.

"You must let us come and see you very soon, won't you? Adela and I will miss you so much, and so will Forster."

"Oh, one soon forgets people," said Penelope.

"Do you think so? We Bethunes don't. We are famous for sticking to people through thick and thin.

"Thank you," said Penelope, under her breath.

"Of course we feel as if our Princess were part of the family, don't we, Forster? You see Mr. Gillbanks has been so intimate with Forster that you two will——"

"But one cannot always adopt people who are married to one's friends."

"The wives of one's friends," said Dora. "Well, no, not always, but with you it is different."

The parting in public was, as are all such partings, a farce. Penzie's remarks were trivial and commonplace, yet her heart seemed to stay with these good, simple people. She had never known any such before, and leaving them was to her like parting with her best thoughts.

All too soon the carriage drove up to the door, and amidst good-byes and advice, Philip saw that everything was stowed away.

Forster came and shook hands with her.

"Good-bye, you must let Philip bring you back here again some day; next summer if you can leave home. You like this place. Then if I am far away at my settlement, I shall be able to fancy you all here."

"Yes," said Penelope quietly.

"Do let us know how you get home," said Mrs. Bethune. "We shall soon follow you."

"It will be dull without you both," put in Dora.

Then the coachman cracked his whip, and Penelope waved her hand.

When they had turned the corner she leant back against the cushions, and closed

her eyes. The picture looked very black and cheerless, and life very purposeless.

"You are sorry to leave them, dearest," said her husband.

"Yes, I am very sorry."

"I wish we had not been recalled, and I wish you had sent me back alone." Her heart gave a bound. "Oh! if that had been possible," but aloud she said:

"It was impossible."

"Yes, I know."

Then seeing that Penelope preferred silence, he gazed at the distance and wondered about the problem that lay so near to his heart.

They hurried on to Paris, staying there one night, then on to London, and taking the night train they went northward; Philip doing everything for his wife's comfort, seeing to everything for her, and longing for one word of recognition; but he received only the cold civility she might have given to a stranger.

At last the trees of the Rothery glen were in sight, and the Palace towers peeped above their cradle of foliage.

A blush of pleasure spread over Penelope's face. This was the home she had done so much to save. Surely her father must live to enjoy it; surely she was not to be deprived of her triumph.

Then the gates were passed, and Jim Oldcorn came running up.

"Oh! Miss Penelope, it's ya day only you gaun past here, and what d'ye duat now, there's over much trouble here."

"How is the King?" said Penelope, turning pale; but before Jim could answer, the carriage pulled up at the front door, and the Duke hastened towards them.

"Penzie, my child—my poor child, how tired you must be; I see, Philip, you have taken good care of her."

"Tell me, uncle, tell me the worst," she said.

"Your father is better—much better in health. His strong constitution has weathered the storm, but——"

"Better," said Penelope, thinking of the hurried journey, "better, then——"

"Yes, the doctors were wrong, he has gradually recovered the use of his limbs. It is strange, very strange."

"You said he was worse."

Penelope looked round and noticed the alteration in the old home. Her heart sank. Everything was changed.

"Look, Gillbanks," said the Duke. "What do you think of this room? We have been hard at work."

The dining-room into which the Duke led them was beautiful beyond recognition. But what was even more surprising was the change in the daily life. A butler and a footman had received the travellers, and a dinner, fit for the returned Princess, was soon served. All this was the work of Philip's money. The Duke had, indeed, been happy, and was now in his element.

The suite of rooms set apart for the pair was as much unrecognisable as the dining-room. Penelope felt strange and unhappy. She had hoped to find herself in the old home with the same old servants and to return to the happy-go-lucky ways of her girlhood; but she was mistaken. All was changed.

After dinner, during which Penelope had asked no questions, the Duke conducted her to the old drawing-room. Here money and art had done their best. The place was a delight to Philip, and even Penzie exclaimed over the exquisite panels, the deep seats and carved settles, and the rich silks and velvets which had transformed poverty into wealth.

The coffee was brought in on the old family silver waiters. All was carried out according to the modern ideas of what was befitting the rank of the Princess of Rothery.

"Well, Philip, have I done as you wished?" said the Duke, with kindling eyes.

"It is certainly more the place where she should live," said Philip, glancing at the beautiful woman men called his wife.

"It is not all finished. One turret is in a sad state, but they are working hard at it, and the other one must not be touched."

Penzie rose, and came wearily towards her uncle. Of one thing she was certain, that her sacrifice had made him happy. He liked the new casket.

"Tell me, uncle, what is the truth about my father? Why have I not seen him?"

"Because—I don't know, but now that he walks about, with the help of a stick, he is more—more——well, you and your husband may as well know the truth; he is stronger in health but his mind is strangely clouded at times. They think the sight of you may do him good. The doctors insisted on my sending for you. They say he is not bad enough to be removed. Listen, I hear his step. He wanders about in a restless condition, but at times he will not let any one see him. Ah! I hear him."

The King entered. He was dressed in

his old fashion, in dirty rough fustian, but his manner was not the same. The crafty, cunning look was still there, but there was another expression on his face which made Penzie shiver.

"There you are, wench. Ah, ah, it's time you were at home. There are robbers here, everywhere; they take my money, and they are always looking for it. But I'm not a fool, I'm not a fool. Who's that man? Another robber. Hunt him away from here. Where are the dogs?—call Jim Oldcorn to drive him off. I won't have any strangers in my house. Come, off with you."

Penelope placed herself between her father and Philip.

"The Winskells have always shown hospitality to strangers," she said severely.

"Nonsense, girl. The man is a robber, he will rob me. Hunt him off. Hark, girl, listen. They have taken away your brother, and I am looking for him. That man knows where he is. Tell him to send for him, and the devil take you both." Then suddenly turning away, the King hastened out of the room.

CHAPTER XXV. HIDDEN.

ALL that night Penelope could not sleep. The shock of seeing her father's state had affected her nerves, and in this newly furnished room she hardly knew herself. She sat down by the open window, though it was chilly now, and wondered what she should do with her future. Philip and her uncle would go on improving the old place, and she would begin the old life, and yet after all it was not the old life. All the joy had gone out of it. She had been filled with a great passion then, and an object in life, and now that she had attained it, it seemed so useless, so worthless without happiness.

But in the old days she had never striven for happiness, never believed it was necessary.

The Palace was wonderfully changed, it was rising from its ruins, but the price she had paid for it was very heavy. Then she began to blame herself. Why should she regret the sacrifice because it had proved a real sacrifice, and not of the kind she had expected? No, she would not despair, it was well worth it. Her father was not an exile from the home of his fathers, and her uncle, the one relation she loved with all her heart, was satisfied. No compunction ever troubled him, no regrets embittered his life.

The night was calm, if chilly. As she looked out on the courtyard, she saw Nero lying asleep on the flag-stones. She gazed at the moonlight playing on the trees of the glen, and making black shadows in the crevices. Life was quiet and peaceful here on the outside.

Suddenly as she gazed, Penelope saw the big dog stretch himself and cock up his ears. Then he rose slowly and stretched himself again as if he were conscious of a noise, but evidently it was not one hostile to his owners.

"Nero!" She was bending out of the window. "Nero! What is the matter?"

Nero looked up at her and wagged his tail. His look was almost human; then he trotted to a little door just underneath Penelope's window. She heard a footstep and the stump of a stick. It must be her father. He ought not to be going out at this time of night. His madness would lead him into danger. Penelope wrapped herself up in a dark cloak and determined to see what would happen. She must guard the old man if possible, since he could not now guard himself.

Opening the door quietly she walked along the passage, and went down some little back stairs. All was silent, for the servants were fast asleep. She walked softly on tip-toe for fear of frightening the King, then having reached the door she saw that it was ajar. Her father had certainly gone out. She stepped out into the courtyard and looked around. Just at this moment the moon shone forth, and Penelope saw the old man slowly groping his way round the enclosed space, now and then tapping the bricks with a small hammer.

What could he be doing? Never had she seen her father thus employed. Had his madness taken this form, or was he looking for something? She walked across the yard and coughed a little, so as to her make her approach heard.

The King turned round sharply.

"Father!" she said. "It is only me. Why are you out so late?"

"Why are you out so late?" he repeated. "Come here, Penelope. You are my child and true to the old traditions. Eh? Yes, I know you are, but you doubted me. What did it mean? Eh? Why was my son killed, killed, and why were you left? Come close, Penelope, and listen. Tell me, why have you brought this stranger here? Eh? What does he mean by lording it over me? Why did he bring his money here?"

"He is my—— I have married him. I have saved the house of Winskell."

"You—— Penelope. Ah! You, a girl! What could you do? What nonsense, child."

"I have done it," said Pensie a little angrily, but trying to remember that she was speaking to her father, and that he was not answerable for his words.

"More fool you, then. You and Greybarrow believe that you know everything. Do you think the King of Rothery wanted your help?"

"But you know, father, that the land was mortgaged, and that very soon——"

"Greybarrow is a fool, and so are you," he repeated. Then changing his tone, he said more quietly: "Look here, girl, since I have been ill my memory is bad, I can't remember; I have tried to remember but I can't. Where is it?"

"Where is what? Why don't you come in? You are not strong enough to be out."

"Strong enough, what nonsense. I was ill, of course. It was the shock of your brother's death. That did muddle me. I don't say I am what I was, but the old will is here."

"Come, father," she said again, "come away."

"You think I'm not sensible, but you are wrong, Penelope, with your cursed pride and your fine airs. Why did you do it without consulting me?"

Penelope shivered a little. It was cold, and the old man looked wild.

"You thought I was useless," she said in a low, earnest voice, "but I have proved you were wrong."

"How? Tell me how. You have made a fine mess of it all. I can see that."

"The house is being rebuilt, and the mortgages are paid off."

"Well, well, fools will be fools; but hark you, girl, I could have done it all myself without your interference. I dare say you and Greybarrow thought yourselves mighty clever. Penelope, come close; these strange servants are always watching us. Listen, do you know how your uncle paid for your fine things?"

"Father, come in," she said, touching his arm.

"You're only a girl; you forget I am King in my own house. Listen, come close. Greybarrow played for his pleasure. He is a gambler. I never was. I—I prefer honest toil."

"I shall call my uncle, father, if——"

"Hush, girl. I'll tell you, I must find it. Find what?"

"Why, the money of course. It's some where, but that cursed accident deprive me of my memory."

"The money! There is none. You are dreaming; it's all fancy," she said impatiently.

"Fancy! Ah! That's you all over Penelope—you and Greybarrow. I tell you that money is somewhere. I must find it. Somewhere, there is enough and to spare. Your old aunt wasn't such a fool as you are. She knew we should want it, and she left me the secret. I kept it well, but now, curse it, it's gone and I must find it—I shall find it. It's under some stone, Penelope. Don't tell any one, I'll find it. I shall try all the places round about, and yet it seems to me it wasn't quite near the house. It was—I was—— A man's only a block without memory. Here, Penelope, try yourself."

He handed her the hammer, but she turned away, wondering what she should do. The crazed brain could not rest in this was the ruling idea.

"Wait a moment. I am tired. I'll rest now; but, Penelope, don't suppose I can't see. You hate that man. Eh! A Winskell never married beneath her yet. Do you know the story of your great-aunt? She loved a man of mean birth. Do you think she married him? No. She—— shall I tell you? She poisoned him——eh!"

The King looked at his daughter in a way which made her shudder.

"Come away, come back to the house."

The old man seemed to calm down then, and he followed her meekly. She helped him into his own room in the old turret, where he would allow no one to keep watch over him.

Then she returned to her own chamber, only to find Philip at the door.

"What is it? Can I help you? Oh, dearest, I saw you go out. You must let me watch your father, and help you. I am here for that."

"You, Philip! of course you can't. He hates strangers. No—you can do nothing, thank you."

Philip left her alone. His face was getting stern and set, but he never uttered a word of complaint. Sometimes when despair seized him, he wondered what evil fate had driven him to this place of sorrow, and why he had not, on that cold evening, been allowed to perish on the dale. Then he took himself to task for his cowardice.

"I must win her. I must win her. She is worth any sorrow. Oh, Penzle, my darling, if you loved you would love so truly!"

ABOUT FLAGS.

THE use of symbols and devices to represent communities and assemblages of men, as well as particular signs by means of which each member of a crowd might be distinguished from his fellows, must be a deeply rooted tendency in human nature. It has existed among all races from the earliest times; manifesting itself in various ways according as national traditions or individual caprices determined the choice of an emblem. One of the first forms under which this custom appeared was probably that institution, partly political and partly religious, known as totemism, which still survives in many American and African tribes. Under this system, each clan venerates as its progenitor and guardian divinity some animal or plant, the image of which serves as the hieroglyph of the clan in its picture-writing, and is inscribed on the tombs of the warriors instead of their personal names. Thus, among the North American Indians, the Wolf, the Tortoise, and the Deer; among the Bechuana of South Africa, the Crocodile, the Lion, the Monkey, and the Elephant; are the emblems and names of various tribes. They are the objects of worship, and the members of each tribe abstain from wearing the skin or eating the flesh of the animal which they look upon as their ancestor and patron.

Among the more civilised nations of antiquity, the emblems which personified the state were derived from the religion of the state, and the standards under which the King marshalled his subjects and led them to battle were the representations of the national deities, or the symbols of their attributes. The most ancient records of the everyday life and institutions of bygone generations which have come down to us are the paintings and sculptures in the tombs and temples of Egypt, and there may be seen the soldiers of Thotmes and Ramses grouped according to their different provinces round a great variety of standards. These were not flags, but wooden or metallic images, brilliantly coloured and borne on tall poles decorated with floating streamers. Among them are seen the heads of Isis and Athor; tablets

inscribed with the monarch's name; and emblems of the gods, such as the sparrow-hawk of Horus, the crocodile of Sebas, and the jackal of Anubis.

The ensigns of the armies of the great empires of Chaldaea and Assyria do not seem to have been so numerous or so varied as in Egypt, to judge by the representation of the campaigns of Assurbanipal which is furnished by the bas-reliefs of Korbabad. The few standards shown there consist of circular discs bearing two bulls running in opposite directions, or the image of Ashur, the tutelary divinity of the country, standing on a bull, and in the act of discharging an arrow. These figures are mounted on the ends of lances ornamented with tassels, and fixed to the front of the chariots of the generals.

A nation of warriors like the Jews would naturally be well provided with ensigns, and they are mentioned when in the wilderness the Children of Israel were ordered to "camp by their troops, ensigns, and standards, and the houses of their kindreds, round about the tabernacle of the Covenant." The sacred text does not describe the nature of these standards, but the Rabbinical commentators of the Middle Ages have supplied the deficiency and given minute details with regard to them; deriving the emblems of the four leading tribes from the mystical animals of the vision of Ezekiel, or the prophecy of Jacob to his sons; and the colours of their flags from the precious stones on the breastplate of the High Priest, on which the names of the twelve patriarchs were engraved. Thus we are told by Rabbi Jonathan ben Uzziel that the silken standard of Juda was of three colours, corresponding with those of the sardius, topaz, and carbuncle, and bore the figure of a young lion, as well as the names of the three tribes, Juda, Issachar, Zabulon, and the words, "Arise, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered and Thine adversaries be driven away before Thee." The standards of the other leading tribes were after the same fashion. That of Ephraim bore the figure of a young man; that of Dan a baillik, or according to others an eagle; and that of Reuben a stag instead of an ox; "for Moses the prophet altered it, that the sin of the calf might not be remembered against them." As these figures were embroidered and not graven, the Talmudic writers maintained that they did not infringe the prohibition directed against the images of living things; but,

in all probability, the Jewish ensigns must have been like the Egyptian, wooden or metal tablets of various shapes set upon lances, for the Hebrew word for a standard means a thing which shines from afar, and they were certainly not emblazoned with any emblem forbidden by the law.

There is no indication in the *Iliad*, nor in any more recent classical writer, that the Greeks ever carried flags in battle to mark either the nationality or the sub-divisions of their troops. It is true that when Hector had routed the Greeks and driven them back to their entrenchments, Agamemnon is described as hastening through the crowd bearing in his hand a purple cloak; but this was not a banner, but an improvised signal to rally his soldiers in a moment of disorder. It was only at a much later period, when the Carians, a race of warlike mountaineers, who, like the Swiss in modern times, served as mercenaries in many lands, had initiated the custom of adorning their shields with devices, that the warriors of the different states could be distinguished by the letters or badges which they carried on their shields. The signals mentioned by Thucydides, which ordered the galleys to advance and engage the enemy, probably consisted in raising a brilliant shield or helmet on a lance, and equally primitive were those described by Polybius at the battle of Selasia between the Peloponnesians and the Macedonians, when Antigonus ordered his Illyrian troops to attack as soon as a linen tunic was hoisted on the slopes of the neighbouring mountain, while the cavalry were to charge when they saw the King wave his red cloak in the air.

In the Roman army, on the contrary, there was a very highly-developed system of military ensigns, which, just as among modern nations, were regarded not merely as a rallying point for a given body of men, but as an emblem of the State, and were therefore surrounded with a veneration which degenerated into idolatry. From a tactical point of view the Roman standards were of more importance than the flag at the present day, for the movements of the troops were entirely regulated by them. According as they were raised and carried forward, planted in the ground, or turned towards the rear, in obedience to the sounds of the horns of the "cornicines," the army broke up its camp and marched, or retreated and halted. In the camp the standards were planted before the General's tent, where their presence sanctified the

spot as though it were a temple, and rendered it a safe depository for the booty collected by the legion; it was to the standards the soldiers swore allegiance, and the first step of a pretender who sought to become Emperor was to seize the standards, as he thereby secured the fidelity of the legions. On feast days the "dusty, awe-inspiring standards," as Pliny calls them, were anointed with perfumes and decorated with garlands; on days of mourning they were stripped of their ornaments, and if, when the order to march was given, their bearers found it difficult to loosen them from the earth, it was looked upon as a fatal omen.

The Romans believed that the first ensign given by Romulus to the band of outlaws he had collected on the Palatine was a handful—"manipulus"—of hay raised on a pole, and that thence the smaller sub-divisions of the legion took their name. It is not recorded at what time more artistic devices replaced this rude contrivance, if, indeed, it ever had any existence; but it is certain that previously to the time of Marius five ensigns were carried in the Roman armies: the Eagle, the Wolf, the Minotaur, the Horse, and the Wild Boar. Marius abolished these with the exception of the Eagle, which was thenceforth carried at the head of the legion by the "aquilifer," under the guard of the "primipilus" or first centurion. The thirty "manipuli" of two centuries each, into which the ten cohorts composing the legion were divided towards the end of the Republic, had their special standards, which were carried in front of the "manipulus" during the march, and stationed in its rear during a combat. The ensign of the cavalry was the "vexillum," a small square banner attached to a crossbar at the end of a lance, and carried by each "turma," or squadron. The bassi-relievi which wind round the column of Trojan, and record that Emperor's campaigns against the Dacians, are the principal source from which we have learned all that we know with regard to the arms and accoutrements of the Roman soldiers. We see there the forms of the different standards carried in the legions, and the strange costume of their bearers, who were clad in the skins of wild beasts, whose open jaws enveloped and covered their helmets. The eagles, originally of silver, but under the Empire of gold, were set on the top of a pole covered with silver and decorated with

crowns, commemorating the victories won by the legion; they grasped the thunder-bolt, and their wings were extended in the act of flying. The standards of the "manipuli" consisted of a lance shod with iron that it might be firmly fixed in the ground, and ornamented with tassels and "phaleræ," or embossed discs of silver, such as were given to soldiers as rewards for valour. Above these was usually a cross-bar bearing the number of the cohort, and from it hung purple ribands ending in silver ivy-leaves. On the summit was a lance-head or an open hand, the symbol of fidelity; or a small shrine with the image of a deity. The ensigns of the Prætorian guards, instead of the plain silver "phaleræ," bore golden crowns of laurel and small busts of the Emperor, which were torn down and replaced by others according as that very turbulent body of soldiers raised one pretender after another to the throne of the Cæsars. As these busts were not attached to the standards of the troops of the line, an image of the Emperor was carried in the ranks of the first cohort of every legion by an "imagifer"; divine honours were rendered to these portraits, and Josephus describes the grief and indignation with which the inhabitants of Jerusalem learned that Pilate had introduced by night into the Holy City ensigns bearing the image of Cæsar, which his predecessors had always refrained from doing out of respect for the religion of the Jewish people.

The Eagles and their idolatrous worship were abolished by Constantine after the vision he had seen while marching against Maxentius, when a cross of light had appeared to him in the sky, surrounded by the words "Εν τούτῳ νικά"—"In this sign thou shalt conquer." He adopted thenceforth a standard called the Labarum, consisting of a lance carrying on its summit, within a wreath, the letters "ΧΡ"—CHR—the monogram of the name of Christ, with a crossbar below it which held a purple banner bearing the images of the Emperor and his family, embroidered in gold and gems; and this continued to be the Imperial ensign of Rome and of Constantinople while those empires lasted.

The Germanic tribes, before whose repeated attacks the institutions and the civilisation of Rome gradually crumbled away and finally disappeared, were accustomed, as we know from Tacitus, to guard in the depths of their forests images of wild beasts, which were brought out and

carried at the head of each tribe when it started on an expedition; and it is possible that from these ancestral emblems, combined with those inspired at a later period by Christianity, were derived the ensigns and armorial bearings of modern Europe. It would, however, be tedious, and in most cases impossible, to attempt to trace the course of this evolution, and the history of the two most ancient and interesting flags, those of France and of England, will suffice.

The monarchy of the Franks was the first to rise out of the ruins of the Roman Empire, but nothing certain is known with regard to the standard under which the Kings of the first race led their troops. We only know that from the time when Clovis visited the tomb of Saint Martin at Tours while on his way to attack the Visigoths, and brought away with him the Saint's cloak—"capa," or "capella"—this relic seems to have always accompanied the Merovingians in their wars. The portable oratory in which it was carried received from it the name of "capella," and the monks who bore it were called "cappelani": whence the words "chapel" and "chaplains." But it is now well established that the Kings of France did not carry as their standard the blue flag of the Abbey of St. Martin. That was borne by the Counts of Anjou as "advocati," or protectors of the Abbey, as the red flag of the Abbey of St. Denys was carried by its chief vassals, the Counts of Vexin, in the same capacity; and the only national flag which can be proved to have existed before the time of Philip the First—1060–1108—was the pennon given by Pope Leo the Third to Charlemagne. A mosaic picture which once filled the space of the banqueting-hall built by Leo the Third in the palace of the Lateran, and a copy of which Benedict the Fourteenth caused to be placed beside the chapel of "La Scala Santa" close to the Basilica, represents the Emperor kneeling before Saint Peter, who gives him a blue flag ending in three points and ornamented with six roses. This was probably the flag which, according to the song of Roland, was first called the "Roman" flag, and afterwards "Montjoie," by which name the barons of Charlemagne hailed it when asking impatiently to be led to battle. It may be observed incidentally that the origin of this celebrated war-cry is one of those puzzles over which antiquaries have much disputed without arriving at any definite result. Some have derived it from the "Mons Gaudii," the hill of joy; now Monte Mario outside Rome, where Charle-

magne probably received the banner in presence of his troops. Others say that a "Montjoye" was a cairn raised on a field of battle as a sign of victory; others, again, that it was a pile of stones by the roadside to show the way, and that when the word was joined to the name of a saint—such as "Montjoie St. Denys," the war-cry of the Kings of France; "Montjoie St. André," that of the Dukes of Burgundy; "Montjoie Notre Dame," that of the Dukes of Bourbon—it meant "Follow the Saint's flag which leads the way to victory."

When Phillip the First, upon the extinction of the male line of the Counts of Vexin, and the reversion of their fief to the crown, inherited the title of "advocatus" of the Abbey of St. Denys, the red flag of the Abbey became the national standard, under the name of the "Oriflamme." In later times a miraculous origin was ascribed to the new flag, and popular legends related how, together with the azure shield charged with golden lilies, it had been brought from Heaven by an angel at the time of the baptism of Clovis, and given to a hermit living near St. Germain-en-Laye to bear to the King. The etymology of the name has been another source of sterile discussions among the learned. It seems, however, to have been derived from the flame-like appearance of the cloven red pennon, as it waved in the air from its gilded lance. When the King was about to enter upon a campaign he took the flag from the Abbey with much ceremony. Surrounded by the great feudatories of the Crown, the monarch, putting off his cloak and girdle, went in procession to the altar, where were enshrined the bodies of Saint Denys and his fellow martyrs, and on which the flag, detached from its staff, was laid during the celebration of Mass. At its conclusion the King gave the Oriflamme to the knight chosen to carry it, who was sworn on the relics of the martyrs to sacrifice, if necessary, his life in its defence, and who then placed it round his neck, and thus carried it till the time came to raise it on the field of battle, where it took precedence of every other standard. At the end of the war it was brought back to the Abbey, placed again on the altar during Mass, and deposited in the treasury.

The first King who took the Oriflamme with these ceremonies was Louis the Sixth, when, in 1124, he prepared to repel the invasion of the Emperor Henry the Fifth; but no engagement took place, as the

bishops and nobles of France raised so large an army that the Emperor withdrew his troops; and Louis the Seventh was the first King before whom it was carried in battle during the Crusade of 1147. The Oriflamme led the armies of France in the Crusades of Saint Louis, and in the long wars against the English and Flemish; it was taken for the last time with the usual solemnities by Louis the Eleventh, when about to march against the Duke of Burgundy in 1465, and the last information with regard to the old flag which had had such a glorious history is given by Frère Jacques Doublet, a monk of St. Denys, who wrote, in 1626, that for many years he had seen the Oriflamme held by the statue of an angel fixed against the pillar to the left of the altar of the Holy Martyrs; and he quotes the description of it given nearly a hundred years previously by the Royal Commissioners, who made an inventory of the treasures of the Abbey. It was a standard of very thick "sandal" cleft in the middle like a pennon, very much worn, and wrapped round a staff covered with gilt copper, and ended by a long sharp lance.

The Oriflamme was replaced by another banner, which for many years had been carried immediately after it—the Royal banner of azure, charged with golden lilies, an emblem of which the origin cannot be traced with certainty. Some antiquarians have supposed that it represented the yellow flower of the iris in the blue waters of the marshes of Friesland, the primitive home of the Sicanbrian Franks; others have derived it from the shape of the iron heads of the halberts and javelins carried by those warriors. The "fleur-de-lis," however, is found in many countries besides France, and ornaments the crowns and sceptres on the seals of the Emperor Barbarossa and Saint Edward the Confessor. Louis the Seventh—1137–1180—seems to have been the first King of France who wore the lilies emblazoned on his shield and embroidered on his Royal mantle. They were at first in indefinite number, but Charles the Sixth reduced them to three, as they have since always appeared on the arms of the Kings of France. This blue flag was in its turn supplanted by the white flag; but the exact date of the change cannot be fixed. According to M. Marius Sepet, the latest authority on the subject, a white cross had always been the badge of the French, as the red cross had been that of the English; this white cross was added to the blue flag during the

reign of Charles the Sixth or Charles the Seventh, and the substitution of a white flag for the blue must have taken place gradually during the succeeding reigns. Under Francis the First the newly created Colonel-General of infantry was granted a white pennon, as a sign of his supremacy, which would seem to prove that at that time the Royal pennon or "cornette," which marked the presence of the King and his military household on the field of battle, was also white; and M. Sepet believes that the white standard was definitely adopted under Henry the Fourth, during whose wars the scarfs and badges of the Royalists had been white.

The last change of the flag was the work of the French Revolution. The three colours then adopted had been those of the liveries of the House of Bourbon since the time of Henry the Fourth; but it was not from thence that the new flag took its origin. When the electoral committee, which had chosen the Deputies sent by Paris to the States General, and still continued to meet at the Hôtel de Ville, decreed the formation of a National Guard in July, 1789, the colours of the City of Paris, blue and red, were chosen to form the cockade worn by the soldiers; and a few days later, at the suggestion of La Fayette, white was added, as the ancient colour of France. The white flag, however, still remained the official flag of the Kingdom; and it was first changed in the navy. In October, 1790, the National Assembly decided that the small flag carried on the bowsprit of a man-of-war should be of the three colours with the red next the staff, while the ship's ensign should bear them in its first quarter, the rest of the flag remaining white; and in 1794 the Convention adopted the present form with the blue next the staff. The military flag remained white, and a "cravate" of the national colours was tied to the staff; in 1791 the flag was surrounded with a "tricolor" band, and the three colours were carried in a canton. But before long this arrangement was looked upon as too Royalist; the "tricolor" was substituted, and the greater part of the old flags were burned in 1793.

Napoleon is said to have intended to replace the three colours of the Revolution by the white of the old monarchy, and the flag which floated over his palace was white charged with a golden eagle, and edged with a blue and a red border. The four first regiments of the line in the army

which invaded Portugal in 1811 wore white uniforms, and if the Empire had lasted, the flag of the "ancien régime" would probably have been restored. It was, indeed, raised again on the return of the Bourbons, but fell in 1830 for, apparently, the last time; though in a country like France, where the unforeseen generally happens, it would be rash to assert that it could never reappear.

Although mediæval chroniclers assure us that King Edwin of Northumberland used to have a standard carried before him in time of peace as well as in war, and that his successor, Saint Oswald, had a banner of purple and gold, which was suspended over his tomb, the earliest representation which we have of an English flag is in the Bayeux tapestry—embroidered probably shortly after the Conquest—and there King Harold may be seen fighting beside his ensign, a dragon waving from the top of a lance planted in the ground. The same tapestry shows us the pennon carried before the Duke of Normandy: it was white charged with a golden cross and surrounded with a blue border. The cross appears also on the pennons shown on the seals of the three Kings who succeeded, but no national flag would seem to have been as yet adopted, for at the battle against the Scots at Northallerton, in 1138, the standard, from which that action usually takes its name, consisted of a tall mast from which floated the banners of Saint Peter, of Saint Wilfrid of Ripon, and of Saint John of Beverley. A hundred years later we again meet with the dragon, for Henry the Third, in 1244, ordered Edward Fitz Odo to make a "standard in fashion of a dragon of red samite, sparkling all over with gold, with a forked tongue like burning fire, and seeming to be in continual movement, and with eyes of sapphire or of other suitable precious stones."

The red cross of Saint George was probably introduced into England by the Norman knights who had been to Jerusalem, whence Stephen, Earl of Blois, had brought back some of the saint's relics in 1101, and it was thenceforth the national device, although in the third Crusade, in 1188, it was agreed between Philip Augustus, Richard Cour-de-Lion, and the Count of Flanders that the French troops should have the privilege of wearing the red cross, which had always been the distinctive badge of the Crusaders; while the English should wear a white cross, and the Flemish a green one. As a standard, it is first

mentioned at the siege of Caerlaverock by Edward the First in 1300, where it was hoisted on the walls along with the Royal banner of gules charged with golden leopards; the banner of Saint Edmund, azure with three crowns or; and that of Saint Edward the Confessor, a cross flory between five martlets or, on an azure ground. During an earlier war against the Scots, Gilbert of Grymmesby, one of the clergy of Saint John of Beverley, carried the banner of that Saint, and was rewarded with a living of the annual value of twenty marks; and in the campaign of 1300, the crimson velvet banner of Saint Cuthbert, richly embroidered with gold and green silk, and held to its staff by broad rings of silver, was carried by William of Gretham, a monk of Durham, who received five pounds for fifty-five days' service and four days spent in returning to his monastery. This banner seems to have been specially employed in warfare against the Scots, for, as late as the reign of Henry the Eighth, the Earl of Surrey, who was charged with the defence of the northern frontier in 1513, visited the Abbey of Durham to receive Saint Cuthbert's standard from the Prior.

While the Royal banner with the arms of England, the national flag of Saint George and other flags with personal cognisances and mottoes accompanied the Sovereign, the nobles had also their standards and banners; the former, very long and narrow, carried the badge and motto of the owner, the latter was emblazoned with his armorial bearings. Every knight banneret who led a body of men-at-arms had also a banner which, as well as the pennon of his lance, bore his arms, and the horsemen he commanded carried pennoncelles with the cross of Saint George and their own crest and motto. This multitude of brightly-coloured banners and pennons must have rendered a mediæval army a wonderfully brilliant and picturesque spectacle, whether on the march or drawn up in battle array, as they waved and fluttered above the flashing lances and armour of the warriors.

On the accession of James the Sixth of Scotland to the throne of England, the first Union flag was formed with the white saltire of St. Andrew and the red cross of Saint George; and on the Royal Standard the red lion of Scotland was quartered with the fleur-de-lis of France, the lions of England, and the harp of Ireland. The origin of the latter emblem is uncertain. The heralds of an earlier date ascribed to Ireland three crowns or, on an azure

shield, and some coins of the time of Edward the Fourth bear that device; but the golden harp appears first on the great seal of Queen Elizabeth, and was first quartered with the Royal arms by James the First. In 1801 the second Union flag was formed by the addition of the red saltire of St. Patrick, another emblem the origin and history of which cannot be traced, but it may be that, as the Duke of Leinster, the head of the Fitzgerald family, was the first Grand Master of the Order of St. Patrick, instituted by George the Third in 1783, the heralds who designed the badge of the Order adopted for that purpose the Fitzgerald coat-of-arms, a white shield, bearing a red saltire, which thence took the name of the Cross of St. Patrick.

A GRANTED WISH.

(A FACT.)

"A GRANTED wish is oft a fatal boon."

So runs the Breton adage, grim and grave.
Truth lies, men say, in many an ancient rune;
'Twere well to ponder ere we hotly crave.
I helped one lifelong yearning to its end;
Hear, and judge for me, if I blessed my friend.

'Twas years ago, one gleamy April day,
When through the blue waves, starred with foamy
fleck,

The Antwerp steamer ploughed upon her way;
And I was pacing on the wind-swept deck,
And, looking down upon the fore-castle,
I saw him, of whose wish I tell.

Weary and frail, the tired old man drew
Close as he might the funnel's warmth to win,
For the keen sea breeze swept remorseless through
The threadbare garments he was shivering in.
I sought him, wrapped him in my plaid, and asked
Why thus alone his failing powers he tasked.

Then, while I lingered with my cigarette,
Like a child, comforted by warmth and word,
He told his story—I remember yet
The wondering pity that within me stirred.
Hearing how youth and manhood wearied past
With one long dream, whose waking came at last.

In a lone valley up in Cumberland,
Teacher at school, head of the village choir,
Tilling his little plot with patient hand,
Always his heart had hid one deep desire,
To wake—just once—the glorious harmonies
That slept in Harlem's giant organ keys.

I do not know how to the lonely lad
The dream of that fair foreign marvel came,
Nor how he gained the knowledge that he had,
But the strong yearning, thrilling all his frame,
Linked to the rush of wind or song of stream
The rolling voices of his waking dream.

The thunder of the mountain waterfall
He likened to the organ's mighty swell;
The blasts that through the rocky passes call
Seemed of its thrilling trumpet peals to tell;
And the poor music flute and fiddle woke
In his grey church, of Harlem's glories spoke.

And all the while, in silent, steadfast hope,
He saved and spared, denying to himself
All simple joys within his narrow scope,
Until the hidden hoard upon his shelf
Sufficed his purpose; but ere that was won
His hair was white, his days were well-nigh done.

Yet in a child's blind, ignorant faith he went
On his strange errand, with nor doubt nor fear,
Yet humbly grateful for the scroll I sent
To make his passage to his idol clear ;
Chancing to know the man whose word could break
Through rule and wont, for my poor pilgrim's sake.

Another day, following to Harlem, I
Asked of my city magnate of his guest,
Who, struck by his wan cheek and eager eye,
Told me that morning he, at my request,
Had led him to the mighty organ, where
He left him in a mood half trance, half prayer.

And for an hour, he said, the rolling waves
Of thunder music, over roofs and floors,
Through massive columns, over storied graves,
And through the great Cathedral's open doors,
Had flowed, in grand, majestic harmony,
O'er listening earth, up to the listening sky.

Then sank to silence, utter and profound.
No lingering cadence floated on the air ;
Down the long aisles died no sweet sighing sound,
As, vaguely startled, we two entered there,
Treading with awestruck footsteps, strangely soft,
The winding staircase to the organ loft.

Crimson, and gold, and blue, the noonday light
Through storied panes fell on the yellow keys,
Tier upon tier ; and on them, still and white,
Lay the old man's thin fingers, as at ease ;
While, through the painted clerestory windows shed,
A golden glow lay on the hoary head

Leant on the oaken back of his high seat.
A radiant smile was on the quiet face ;
Such smile as those we've loved and lost may greet.
And, in the silent, solemn, holy place,
We, as we speechless stood and looked on him,
Felt he was listening with the Seraphim

To music sweeter than the lovely strains
That fed the fancies of the lonely boy ;
To music richer than the dreamy gains
That gave the tired man his hours of joy ;
To music such as rings in heaven alone
From harps of seraphs round the great white throne.

Whether he died because the frail heart-strings
Snapped at the answer to his lifelong cry ;
Whether because, as in all earthly things,
The dream transcended the reality ;
Whether his granted wish brought good or ill,
I cannot tell : decide it as you will.

THE GLAMOUR OF SPRING.

I HAVE remarked that in my town the rates have a knack of rising in spring ; that is to say, the councillors assembled cannot resist the seasonable impulse. A pretext is easily discovered. Either a new area has been condemned and an acre or two of old houses have to be pulled down at the town's expense, or a new sewage system, which in September seemed objectionable, seems admirable and irrealisable in April or May ; or generosity of a sudden runs rampant in the civic mind as sap in the trees, and it is decided unanimously to raise the salaries of all the corporation officials, and whitewash and renovate every public building in the borough. We burgesses are not concerned deeply to investigate the causes of this phenomenon. We have got used to it. So many pence

in the pound—or in a happy year but so many farthings—additional rate now seems as natural in the spring of the year as to see and hearken to the larks betwixt the brown fields and the blue, cloud-flecked heavens.

There is no doubt about it : when we have fairly done with winter's ice and snow—or think we have—our spirits are prone to leap with an almost extravagant degree of elation. The time of hope and promise has begun. The mind, like the creative or regenerative principle in nature, has been torpid for three or four months ; and it has, again like nature—of which it is a microcosm—acquired strength in repose. If from November or December you have been brooding over an idea that seems to have great material or other profit innate within it, you may look to the spring to start it abruptly into practical existence. The fortune that at Christmas seemed a possibility is now a solid probability : you may even think of the castle, not necessarily in the air, which will be your eventual reward for your various cogitations. They were dismal and desperate enough at times, these cogitations, quite uncheered by aught except passionate desire. But now that the leaves are budding, and the birds carol against each other like Welshmen at a national festival, all doubt scuds from your mind. The world seems a good place and you see your way to carve a fortune out of it, and perhaps gain the veneration of mankind into the bargain.

I know a man of letters who is peculiarly susceptible to this vernal impetus. He has had, he tells me, fair success in the literary groove, which has, in spite of himself, claimed him for its own. But he has never been satisfied with the world or himself, because he has hitherto failed to write a three-volumed novel of sufficient merit to please a certain most exacting publisher. He has written nine or ten novels ; but they are in manuscript. Each, he fondly hopes, is an improvement on its predecessor. Perhaps he is right in his hope ; I cannot tell. He has read to me passages from several of them, which are certainly replete with good sense and not devoid of humour. But then that says nothing for the creation as a whole, and it is as a whole that a novel must be judged. However, regularly as the spring comes round, this persevering ant of a man recurs to his mournful piles of rejected manuscript, and puckers his forehead over them as he sanguinely attempts to discern wherein he has failed to fulfil

his purpose. And even while his mind ploughs its way through this vast and melancholy litter, an idea for a new effort grips him and imperatively insists upon developement. Thus, with the new spring, comes the beginning of a new novel. There may be only new disappointment and walling at the end of it; but of that he knows nothing in the spring, any more than the rosebud that breaks so charmingly in June reckes of its miserable decay in August or September. He is consoled for a time, and that is much. He may even succeed at last, and so get instant compensation for his many autumnal and wintry fits of green despondency and black despair.

It is the season that especially appeals to persons engaged in what I may term creative pursuits—artists, authors, composers and inventors. The poet now has his finest fits and purest inspirations. Nature accompanies him with her many voices, and lifts him to ecstasies unknown later in the year. He more than any of us can now revel in what Rudyard Kipling describes as the "clean, clear joy of creation, which does not come to man too often lest he should consider himself the equal of his God, and so refuse to die at the appointed time."

But though these men profit exceptionally by the vernal breezes, and the vernal sunshine, and soothing rain, we all share in the gain. What are the spring fashions but an outcome of this engrained seasonable longing for change? The weather has much less to do with the matter than sheer instinct. Even as the trees and shrubs now get new garments, so do our wives and daughters, who are more natural than ourselves, determine to be endowed in like manner.

Again, who that has but a dozen square yards of garden does not know the pleasure and pride they can confer? It is one thing to compose a poem or an opera, and one thing to till a plot of ground, sow seed therein, and tend your young cabbages or flowers until they have come to their prime. And there is little difference fundamentally in the kind of joy of these two pursuits. As Dr. Armstrong, in his old-fashioned but vigorous verse on "The Art of Preserving Health," reminds us:

To raise the insipid nature of the ground
Is to create, and gives a godlike joy,
Which ev'ry year improves.

Thus the commonest and meanest of gardeners or peasants may, if he will, taste of the rapture that attends upon the highest

kind of intellectual effort. A bed of spring onions ought to be enough for the purpose.

But the chief stimulus of all that comes to us with the mild westerly winds is the one that stirs our hearts. The birds begin their courtship, and the lambs are in the field. In like manner the breath of love breathes among us and sets many a tender maiden heart gently beating for the first time. The moonlit evenings of April are responsible for much, and so is the coquettish aspect of the country, when all the trees and hedges are in the first bloom of their verdure. The blackbird in the ash strains his throat to tell something of the fervour of his feelings. The youth sitting under the ash with his life's idol pillowed fondly against his shoulder, is also at his best, while he ravishes the girl's ears with the tale of his passion and his determination to make her wedded life with him one long sweet psalm of joy. True, the odds are that our young friend does not fly to quite so lofty a pitch as this—does not even aim at such an elevation. But the occasion, and the season, and the melodious blackbird overhead, all combined, bring the lovers into a state of mental transport which stirs the imagination to its deepest depths. Perhaps the lad's theme is all—or nearly—on the simple text: "I'm getting a pound a week now, and next year it will be thirty shillings, and we can live on that, can't we, my darling?" Even if it be so, it will suffice. The maiden fancy, like the maiden heart, is, in April or May, free of all fetters. It can make an Adonis of Caliban, and see an endless vista of felicity in the married life that begins with love and thirty shillings a week, and goes on to middle age with nine children and still but thirty shillings a week. The sweet spring glamour is over all; and the cuckoo murmuring in the wood puts the crowning touch to the romance that for the moment possesses all existence.

There is a story told of a servant-maid and a carpenter who began their wooing in youth. Circumstances hindered their marriage. The servant-maid in time grew into a housekeeper. She was still unwedded; in fact, she had become a middle-aged woman. The carpenter still loved her and was still true to her. But gradually they talked less and less about marriage. Their intimacy for nine months in the year was one of firm, tried friendship merely. Only when the spring came round did the carpenter renew his more ardent vows and wishes—with entreaties, faint yet still

sincere, that his love would name the day. This hot fit lasted while the spring lasted. Afterwards their normal intercourse was resumed. So it went on for years until the woman inherited a little money from her mistress, who had died. She was then grey-haired. But another new springtime was at hand; and now at last the faithful swain won his way with her. They had their final courtship-walk by the riverside under the willows, and in June one day they were married.

Nothing is so effective in life as unswerving, stubborn perseverance; and never is a man more spurred on to strong deeds than in this hopeful season of the year. It seems impossible that now, when Nature is smiling with promise, honest human endeavour should be in vain. I imagine it is the time of all times when company promoters of all kinds lay their snares for the simple-minded. Twenty per cent. would in November seem too barefaced a lure even to the least sophisticated of old maids or country parsons. But with the landscape gorgeous in its panoply of bud and blossom by the hundredfold, twenty per cent. seems quite a reasonable — though none the less attractive — rate of interest on invested money.

An ounce of experience is worth a pound of theory and conjecture. On this subject, then, I may add that during the last week I have received ten brazen circulars from stockjobbers and prospectus-mongers, whereas an ordinary week brings me scarcely a couple such beguiling documents.

The spring is the time for exhilarating colour. What can be more delightful than a larch-wood in late April or May, with its golden tips glowing in the sunshine? The autumnal tints of a beech-wood are gorgeous enough, but they do not gladden like the graces of spring. They are the glories that herald decay, the tokens of a superb maturity on the decline. One must be in a particular mood to appreciate such tokens. On the other hand, the bright gold and green of spring is eternally refreshing. Hope and vigorous intentions run riot at the sight. It is impossible to feel bored in the country in spring.

Here is a gay picture of April done by an English writer in 1661, when the winter of Puritanism had just had its solemn and supercilious nose put lamentably out of joint:

"The youth of the country make ready for the morris-dance, and the merry milk-maid supplies them with ribbons her true love had given her. The little fishes lie nibbling at the bait, and the porpoise plays in the pride of the tide. The shepherds entertain the princes of Arcadia with pleasant roundelays. The aged feel a kind of youth, and youth hath a spirit full of life and activity; the aged hairs refreshen, and the youthful cheeks are as red as a cherry. The lark and the lamb look up at the sun, and the labourer is abroad by the dawning of the day. The sheep's eye in the lamb's head tells kind-hearted maids strange tales, and faith and troth make the true-lover's knot. It were a world to set down the worth of this month; for it is Heaven's blessing and the earth's comfort."

Life has changed its tone since the author of "The Twelve Moneths" wrote this. But it is still possible to feel that the right note is struck here. We have no morris-dances nowadays, and it may be doubted if any British milkmaids now look into the eyes of lambs for instruction in affairs of the heart. But the wise angler still, as in Charles the Second's time, goes to the riverside as early in the year as he can, to tempt the trout in the season of their most confiding innocence. There are no such baskets of fish got in garish, magnificent July, as in bright, fickle April; and it is far gayer to throw the fly to the music of the carolling of birds than to the buzz of gnats gyrating in the fever of their brief existence.

Instead of morris-dances we Britons of the nineteenth century have excursion trains and other innumerable temptations to judicious vernal junketing. We have the Easter volunteer manoeuvres, the chestnut trees of Bushey Park, the last football matches, and the beginning of cycle tours. And our hearts are much the same as the hearts of our forefathers, so that love's spring flourish is as earnest and lusty as ever it was, in spite of a metropolis of bricks and mortar housing four or five millions of mortals apart from the sunlit meadows and the ripple of silvery streams.

I suppose among its other attributes the spring may be credited with the most emphatic attempts at turning over new leaves in moral matters. Nature then seems so good and kind that it appears easier than at other times to chime in with her, and be no longer an unnatural son of so generous a mother. The March

winds may purify a character as well as a tract of malarious land, and the showers of April are full of promise and fertilisation for the future. If failure comes one year, why may it not this spring—or the next, or the next—be followed, for good and all, by a crowning success? At least, we may be encouraged to try, and trying, some people tell us, is only a little removed in order of merit from full-blown success itself.

ENGLISHMEN IN AFRICA.

ONE wonders where England would have been, as regards her standing among the nations, if the ideas of which we have heard a good deal of recent years had been current some centuries ago. If, for instance, attacks which have been made upon the recent proceedings of Englishmen in Africa had been made upon the proceedings of certain Englishmen in the days of "auld lang syne." True, Englishmen have been used to being attacked, but scarcely to being attacked from the same quarter from which these recent attacks have come: they have not been used to being attacked by their own kith and kin.

There was a time in England when the word "patriot" was looked at askance by decent men. And rightly so. There are, to-day, patriots and patriots. There is the patriotism of the gentleman who, metaphorically, desires the world to tread upon the tail of his country's coat, for the sake of "creating a little diversion." And, especially, there is that new sort of "patriotism," which is the characteristic of the "patriots" who are so keenly desirous to keep untarnished the stainlessness of their country's honour, that they would rather see her beaten than victorious in undertakings of which—for severely moral reasons!—they disapprove. This is a curious sort of patriotism. In England it is quite one of the features of the day. In France, or in Germany, or in the United States, or in any part of the world except in England, persons who indulged in this sort of patriotism in public places would, in a remarkably short space of time, find themselves in a position of singular discomfort. In England we manage things in a different way.

We are indebted for this sort of patriotism, possibly, to a misapprehension of plain facts. Without, for the moment, approving or disapproving of recent events in Africa, one thing seems certain, that, if English-

men had not behaved in the same way over and over and over again in the days which are gone, England, instead of being one of the greatest nations which the world has seen, would not only be one of the smallest but it would, probably, not be a nation at all. Present day geographers would describe it an appanage of one of the great powers—say of France, as, the conditions being what they are, the Isle of Man is an appanage of ours. Possibly such a state of things would accord with the views of some of our modern patriots. In such a case it might be that they would be inveighing against the greed and the cowardice of the Englishmen who were struggling for independence.

Moral force is a beautiful thing, although not infrequently it is difficult to know what is meant by moral force. But, if Jones runs a race with Brown, let the pundits say what they will, moral force will not win the race for Jones; if he does win, it will be because he runs faster than Brown. So in the race which is always being run between the nations. Moral force may be a beautiful entity, but beautiful entities do not score.

We have been told that the whole of the recent events in Africa have been in the nature of a commercial speculation. That a number of desperate men, of adventurers, went out there for the sole purpose of making money. One would like to know what has been the guiding impulse of men since the beginnings of time, but the desire of making money? What has populated America with white men but the desire of making money? What colonising expedition was ever undertaken, the root idea of the promoters of which was not the desire of making money? This is no new thing. As things are, money and life are practically interchangeable terms. We are all struggle-for-lifers. If a man cannot get money, i.e. life, where he is; if he is wise, if he has any of the essence of manhood in him, he goes to where he can. In some form or other the desire of making money has bellied out the sails of all the ships of all the explorers which the world has known. It wafted Drake across the waters, and Froisher, and Columbus, and Cortes, and Pizarro—not to speak of the Phœnicians, the Romans, the Vikings, the Saxons, those undaunted freebooters who laid the foundations of the world. It was the desire for money which sent Englishmen in haste to Oceania—just as it is that desire which is sending the peoples of all the countries of Europe to what is rapidly

ceasing to be the Dark Continent. We have spent our blood and our substance in the endeavour to obtain an entrance; why should we, alone of all the peoples, decline to pass through the door which we ourselves have opened?

Let us avoid tall talking. Let us keep off that sort of moralistic platform which reminds us so inevitably of Mr. Pecksniff. Let us look plain facts in the face. Who among us has not a son, or a brother, or a relation of some sort, or at least an acquaintance, who is of the number of those who are making history in Africa? And why, as a rule, have they gone there? Is it not because the press at home is so great that it is becoming harder and harder for the average man, and especially for the average young man, to keep his feet in the crowd?

It may be replied—by some persons it is replied—that that is no reason why we, any of us, should go to a land which is not ours, and treat it as if it were our own. In thus replying, the individuals who are lading out from the stock which they keep for their friends the morals which they wish us to accept as ours, seem to think that they have finally disposed of the question. They are mistaken. Surely, even alight reflection would show them that the question is one which bristles with complications. That to answer it as they seem to suppose that it can be answered would be to strike deep at every social and political, and one might almost add, moral institution at present existing in the world.

Socialists tell us that all men are equal; that they all have equal rights; that, in particular, they have all an equal right to the things which are. Surely, they do not intend their doctrines to apply only to some particular portion of the earth's circumference. If they intend their doctrines to have universal application, then, obviously, from the Socialist standpoint, we Englishmen, as men, have a right to a share of Africa. It is—always from the Socialist standpoint—absurd to suppose that one black man, merely because he is black, has the right to monopolise territory for his own extravagant, and, indeed, purposeless gratification, to the exclusion of, at least, ten thousand other men, to whom that very territory would mean the difference between life and death.

“Good” Radicals are beginning to insist that land is common property—not, of course, land in England only, but land all

the world over. If that is so, why should we, merely because we are Englishmen, be debarred from the enjoyment of our common heritage in Africa?

Theorists apart, our own common sense, our own hard experience, tells us that the charter of our rights is the strength to assert, and to maintain, them. So long as we are strong enough to hold our own, we hold our own; very little longer. This applies alike to individuals and to nations. It may seem a hard fact; some facts do seem hard; but it is a fact. It may not be the case in another world; it is in this. Practically, every foot of land in Europe, at the present day, is being held by the strong hand, and the strong hand only. In spite of their protestations of peace and of goodwill, the nations watch each other with jealous eyes, with their hands for ever stealing towards the handles of their swords. It is not because they love fighting for the fighting's sake. It might have been so once upon a time; it is not so now. It is because the feeling is growing stronger and stronger in the minds of men, that existence is, after all, in a great measure a question of the survival of the fittest; that the weakest goes to the wall; that the crowd is becoming so great that it is only by the exercise of its own innate strength that a nation, like an individual, can save itself from being trampled under foot.

Great Britain, geographically, is nothing at all. It is a mere spot on the earth's surface. But it is filled with a host of prolific men and of prolific women. Its already teeming population continually increases. To suppose that, in perpetuity, it can find room, within its own limits, for all its sons and daughters, is to suppose a patent absurdity. One might as reasonably assert that the piece of land which is sufficient to support a man and a woman, will be, also, sufficient to support all their descendants through endless generations. Our sons and daughters are, probably, as virile as their forbears, for which we, who have borne them, surely have cause to give thanks. What is to become of them? Are they to go under? Are we to dispose of them at their birth? Or are they to dispose of us, and so exemplify the survival of the fittest by causing youth to triumph over age?

This is not a problem which is peculiar to England. It is a problem which is besetting all the historic nations, both of Europe and of Asia. It is even beginning

to trouble a nation which relatively, as yet, has no history: it is beginning to vex the United States. There is so much land in the world, and no more. For the most part it is populated. Some of it is overpopulated. Even in Australasia the land seems, for the moment, to have as large a population as it can bear. Only in one part of the world can there still be said to be, to all intents and purposes, no population at all. That part of the world is Africa. Speaking generally, the northern coasts of Africa have been known from the beginning. Thereabouts was the cradle of history. Still speaking generally, until the other day the remainder of its vastnesses was as little known to us as is now the planet Mars. We spoke of it, emphatically, as the Dark Continent. If its darkness is now becoming light, to whom, primarily, is that fact owing? To Englishmen! As the light broadens, Germans, Italians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Portuguese, Belgians, Dutchmen, are advancing in increasing numbers towards the enjoyment of its rays. Are Englishmen alone to be excluded? The question has been asked before; it is repeated: why? On a point of morals! Go to!

Not much is known of the history of Central, of Southern, and of Western Africa, but what little is known shows this—shows it beyond any possibility of doubt—that if ever there was a part of the world in which the rule of the strong hand has been the only rule, that part of the world is here. It has been, for the most part, a history of perpetual warfare—warfare, too, which has been conspicuous for the absence of every element of fair play. Strength has prevailed over weakness, and, in prevailing, has used its strength with relentless, awful cruelty. The thing is not being urged as a sin against the African peoples; it is simply being stated as a fact. So far as we know, they have not pretended to the possession of any particularly burdensome code of morals; and they have acted consistently up to their pretensions. One result of this state of affairs has, not improbably, been this: that changes have taken place with kaleidoscopic suddenness; that every now and then one tribe has exterminated another with pantomimic completeness and rapidity; and that far the larger majority of the so-called tribes would be hard put to it if they were required to produce proof of twenty-five years of uninterrupted tenancy of the lands which they now claim as their own. How,

in the first place, did they come to be in their possession? The odds are considerable that the answer would be—by right of conquest. Why, then, to put it on the lowest grounds, should they object to being ejected—the process being attended by circumstances of incomparably less cruelty—in their turn, as they ejected the former proprietors of the soil?

One has read in one way or another a good deal about the occupation of Britain by the Roman legions, but one does not recall many passages in which that occupation is spoken of as a crime. After the Romans went, other people tried trips to Britain, and pretty havoc some of them seem to have played, until, finally, the Normans came to stay. One has also read a good deal about these transactions, but, again, one does not recall many passages in which they are spoken of as crimes. And yet if our treatment of Lobengula was criminal, how much more were those things criminal? Is it because they took place so long ago that we do not think of them as crimes, or is it because we are aware that it is in no slight degree to those very transactions that we, as a nation, owe our greatness? Do we not know that if a great future is in store for Central Africa, one step was taken forward towards that future when a handful of Englishmen laid the Matabele low? The same unbending code of morals cannot be applied to varying sets of circumstances. Loyola spoke correctly, out of the fulness of a wide experience, when he more than suggested that there are righteous crimes. What sane man would deny that the practical extinction of the Red Indian—crime, surely, according to every moral code, though it was—has not been justified by the history up to the present day, and by the promise for the future, of the United States of North America?

It is difficult to write dispassionately of contemporary events. The air is charged with electricity. Each man has his own axe to grind. It is not easy amidst the hubbub to perceive clearly who has the best claim to the grindstone. It is more than probable that mistakes have been made in Africa—mistakes of a kind which it is impossible to excuse. But it is just as probable that such mistakes have been made on both sides; indeed, on all sides, for the sides are many. The main question at issue is the question which this many a day has troubled philanthropists and politicians alike—the question of the white man and the black; of the man who calls

himself civilised, and the man whom we call savage. Those who have graduated in the only school which makes the scholar, the school of experience, assert that it is impossible for white men and black men to live on an equality side by side. Nature itself is against it; their ideas are not our ideas, and our ways are not theirs. One or the other must be dominant. Put two persons together in one house, one a weak-minded, self-indulgent wastrel, the other a clear-sighted, level-headed man, let them start with all the theoretical equality you like, which, very shortly, is bound to rule?

It may be true that recent events in Africa have been precipitated by operators on the Stock Exchange. Is there anything startling in that? In how much of contemporary history have operators on the various Bourses not had fingers in the pie? One would rather go out as the nominee of a treasure-seeking company, than in the employ of some of the so-called missionary societies—though it must be owned that it is to choose what is often the less remunerative profession of the two. But, in so doing, one is honest. One does proclaim what it is one is going to seek. The missionary, not seldom, amasses flocks and herds, and miles and miles of the choicest land, and waxes fat, and becomes the great man of the country, and he does it all under the cloak of his pretensions to preach the doctrines of the Man of Sorrows.

There would have been no need for the wire-pulling, stock-rigging company, were it not for the very men who are the first to exclaim against it. Africa might practically have been ours by now. We might have been free to come and go where we would. But these gentlemen of Little England have resolved that the advance of Great Britain shall be stayed; that she shall go back, not forward. So all the nations of Europe are taking advantage of the opportunities we flouted, and are crowding us out. It is quite on the cards that the next great European war will be the direct outcome of some boundary trouble in Africa, unless we keep backing out and backing out, as our friends the latter-day patriots so ardently desire. It was only when it was clearly perceived that Great Britain, as a nation, did not intend to secure for its children the benefits which were being offered by the opening up of the Dark Continent, that enterprising men began this company-mongering. Private enterprise stepped in

where national enterprise refused to tread. It is the story of the old East India Company over again. India was ruled by a private company for years. John Company made wars, and made and unmade nations; just as it seems likely that parts of Africa will be ruled by private companies. Whose fault is it? One has still to learn that, in matters of this sort, Great Britain arrogates to herself the power of not only refusing to eat the cake herself, but also of refusing to allow any of her children to take a nibble at it either. Is this the meaning of the New Liberty? of Radical Freedom? Our latter-day patriots would string Francis Drake mast-high. This is the age of the moralists, and now is the reign of morality.

"Does any one suppose," we are asked, "that these company-mongers have been actuated, in what they have done, by patriotic motives?" Not a bit of it. One supposes nothing. One desires to avoid tall talking, either on the one side or the other. The plain man accepts the plain facts. Of course they were seeking profit—and profit, first of all, for themselves. Again one asks, what has been the motive power of all the great deeds which the world has seen? And again one answers, in some form or other, self-advancement. If a man has not in him the element of self-seeking, he has nothing. For a man, or for a company of men, to have adventured their substance in Africa, or anywhere else, without a confident hope of getting, in return, something worth the getting, would have been an act of imbecility.

Doctors differ. We are told, by this authority, that in Africa Englishmen will, and can, flourish neither in health nor in estate; by that authority, that it is in all senses an El Dorado. Who shall decide? Adventures are to the adventurous. If there is any man who has in him the fibre which has placed the English-speaking race in command the whole world over, and seeks adventure, let him try Africa. Why not? He carries his life with him in his hand. As for his reputation, it can scarcely suffer more in Africa than in the dirty ditch of contemporary home politics. He will be a pioneer. A pioneer's work cannot be done with kid-gloved hands. He will find himself constrained to do things which, it may be, he would rather have left undone—that is the lot of the pioneer. He will be assailed, at home, by carping critics, faddists, doctrinaires, arm-chair politicians, who are, mostly, men of wealth, if of nothing

else, and who will shower mud on him in and out of season. And the chances are, that, after all, he will fail in attaining the object of his heart's desire. Possibly he will leave his bones to bleach upon an African plain. And, perhaps, some day there will rise in Africa another new thing, a great nation, such as is now rising in Australia; a new and an important factor, which shall go to make the product of the world; and he who went, and who stayed, will be accounted as if he had never been. The adventurers, the pioneers, the men who laid the foundations, will, no doubt, in the day of empire be forgotten, probably their memory will be hidden in a storm of obloquy. It is the fortune of war. As things are, the men who talk have a better chance of keeping their memory green than the men who merely do. What does it matter?

When one thinks of some of the things which have already been done by Englishmen in Africa, and reflects that some of these men, who have died "facing fearful odds," have been called cowards, one begins to understand what is meant by the revolution which, we are told, is taking place in the English language. The duel is a thing of the past in England. We are too moral. Were it not so, a coward would not be so quick to see himself mirrored in others. In no other country in the world would men be suffered to say with impunity the things which certain Englishmen have been saying of their fellow-countrymen who, in Africa, have been fighting their country's battles. It would seem as if in England we are, at least, becoming proficient in the arts of Billingsgate; license—not liberty!—of speech is becoming a national shame.

In Africa history is being quickly made, and the making is not unaccompanied by errors. But all the evidence goes to show that, generally speaking, there is an honest desire on the part of Englishmen to be tender towards native susceptibilities. Pioneers are neither aesthetes nor "dudes"; they are not even diplomatists. They are, above and beyond all things, men of action. Acts which seem startling to us, at a distance, appear inevitable enough when you are on the spot, and especially when you know—a knowledge which stay-at-home Englishmen seldom realise!—that you are carrying your life in your hands. The native is a difficult man to live with—particularly to live in peace with. How difficult, one has to live with him to know.

It is easy enough to say that Englishmen have no right to come into contact with natives, or that they have no right to be in Africa at all. What right have we to be in India, or Russia in Asia, or France in Algeria, or Germany in Poland, or Austria in Hungary, or the Turks in Turkey, or the peoples in the United States to be anywhere at all? They have the right of the strong hand, and of the strong hand only. If we come to a question of abstract right, all the nations of the world will have to start digging up the bones of the aborigines; they will have to clothe them with flesh, and animate them with life. And, having done so, we who are now alive all the world over will have, with one accord, to go in for a policy of wholesale skedaddle. Pray, where shall we skedaddle to?

MARCELLINE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

C'est le mois de Marie,
C'est le mois le plus beau.

sang the worshippers in the village church perched sixteen hundred feet above the sea-level, and they sang it again in their hearts when, early mass over, they came trooping out of doors into the May sunshine. There were banks of snow still in the dark ravines, and on the northern slopes of the mountains behind, but the buds were swelling on the birches, and the earliest of the warblers twittering among the tops of the still leafless branches. The steep rocky hillside already looked green in patches, and a vapour arose from the newly-exposed fields, reaching in long narrow strips down to the wooded bluff next the river.

Gesticulating vigorously to emphasize their quaint Canadian "patois," the churchgoers sauntered in groups down the one street of the village. There was no sidewalk, and the few shops could hardly be distinguished from the ordinary cottages, with their high roofs and small windows. Last of the string of calèches and buckboards came Monsieur and Madame Michaud, a fine-looking old couple, with their daughter Corinne and their niece Marcelline on the back seat of the freshly-painted "quatre roux." The young girls were about the same age, and each wore a gaily-trimmed spring hat; but there the resemblance ceased. Corinne was the typical French Canadian—a broad-faced, pleasant-looking brunette, short and stout in figure—while Marcelline seemed a changeling of another

race. She was tall and alight, her fair skin warmed into a faint pink at the cheeks, her eyes were blue as the river in sunshine, and her hair was golden as the track of light upon the water.

When they reached the brow of the first hill to begin the steep descent to the lower level where the farms were, Monsieur Michaud got down from the buckboard and walked, while Madame drove. Corinne watched the sure-footed pony picking his steps as he zigzagged down the stony slope, but Marcelline's gaze wandered dreamily across the plateau below to the blue St. Lawrence, spreading himself twenty miles wide to take the green Isle aux Coudres on his bosom. From that height she could see over the island the main channel of the river bordered by the farther shore, a wavy purple band upon the horizon.

"There is no longer ice in the river," she said presently.

"No," replied Corinne; "Antoine will be well on his way to the fishing-banks by this time."

"When he ought to be at the plough," said Madame bitterly. Her other sons were all settled on farms near her, and she could not forgive the youngest for leaving the few acres around the old homestead which his father had reserved for him.

"Antoine was always fond of the water," pleaded Corinne for her twin brother.

"He went without his mother's blessing, and no good will come of it," replied Madame sternly, as her husband reseated himself and took the reins.

"Vex not thyself, ma mère," he said. "Antoine has departed in a poor boat with a difficult captain, and rest certain he will be back by haying time."

"He had better be home by then, the ungrateful one—to go off without leave of his parents, without even saying adieu!"

He had said adieu to Marcelline, but she did not think it necessary to mention that circumstance. Why should she tell her aunt, never too sympathetic, that Antoine had gone off in passionate haste because she had refused to marry him? It was but three days since they had walked together to the wharf to wait for a parcel expected from Quebec by the Saguenay boat, which touched twice a week at that port. Had the steamer been on time, or had Marcelline looked less fresh and sweet in her first summer gown, the declaration might not have come just then, for it took the girl by surprise.

"I love you like a sister, Antoine. Have I not been your sister ever since uncle brought me home when I was only twelve?"

"I have never thought of you as a sister," cried the impetuous Antoine. "I have loved you always, and I always shall, but I will go away, and then you will learn to care. One values not the sheep-dog that lies ever at the door."

He sent a message home to his mother, and embarked straightway on a schooner that happened then to be setting sail from the wharf.

Marcelline had not regretted her decision, but still on that slow drive home from church down the break-neck hills, her mind occasionally resorted to her uncle's expression, "a poor boat."

The Michaud farmhouse, roughcast and coloured yellow, stood several fields distant from the main road, across three ravines down which the spring torrents were rushing. Corinne jumped down from the back seat while the "quatre roux" was in motion, and ran forward to open the gate leading into each field, waiting also to shut it. She was active as her brother and almost as strong. Nothing seemed to tire her, but her unceasing energy, even the overflowing affection for herself, often wearied the sensitive Marcelline. With the twin cousins equally devoted to her, she had sometimes felt herself between two fires, but now that the fiercer flame was removed she hoped that the time would never come when she would miss its warmth. Undemonstrative by nature, she did not wish those who loved her to be too much like herself, and she noted, not without a twinge of jealousy, that Corinne seemed on the verge of setting up another idol in her heart in the shape of Lucien Potvin, the miller's son.

There were the usual number of Sunday visitors at the Michaud homestead that afternoon. It was still too cold for the elderly people to sit out of doors, but the young ones sunned themselves on the gallery at the front of the house.

At the top of the steps leading down to the tobacco-garden sat Lucien Potvin near the feet of Marcelline, who was swinging gently to and fro in a rocking-chair of home manufacture. Corinne watched the pair, though she kept up an animated conversation with a cousin from the village. He did not look strong, this young miller. Fair he was, like Marcelline, but he lacked the gold in his hair and the red in his

cheek, and when clad in his floury working dress he seemed all of a greyish white. In spite of his five feet ten inches Corinne could have thrown him in wrestling, and perhaps he suspected as much and stood in awe of her superior strength, for he sought ever to be with her gentler cousin.

"So Antoine has turned sailor," he said, looking up at the swaying face whose pinkness deepened to red as he spoke.

"Yes," responded Marcelline lightly. "But he will soon return."

"You think he will not stay the whole season down the Gulf?"

"No, why should he? He is needed here."

"A man does not always as 'he ought. You will tell him to come back?"

"I? How should I?" but her eyes fell before the mild blue ones so nearly the shade of her own, and she nervously fingered the locket which Antoine had given her at Christmas. It hung round her neck by a thick golden chain, and until recently had never been worn except on state occasions. Lucien was satisfied.

"That is why he went away," he said to himself. "I wonder if there is hope now for any one else."

Evidently he thought it worth while to try. Marcelline taught the twenty or thirty children in the small school down near the mill at the water's edge, and nearly every day he would contrive to meet her as she was going home. Perhaps it was to give her the earliest wild flowers which he had found in a sunny nook of the high bank along the shore, or to call her attention to the first blue-bird of the season, and later on to the white-throated sparrow, whose song without words he converted into "La belle Marcelline."

On the lower St. Lawrence the Queen's Birthday is not a festival such as Saint Jean Baptiste Day, and on the twenty-fourth of May Marcelline kept school as usual. Here too, as usual, was Lucien strolling out of the mill to meet her as she went past on her way home, ready with an excuse to detain her.

"Would you not like to sail a little this afternoon, Marcelline? The wind is fair."

"But the tide is going out. Here is Corinne coming down the hill now to go to the fisheries."

"Shame that she has to do Antoine's work! Is there no news of him?"

"None!" replied Marcelline shortly, as her cousin appeared at the head of the path leading down to the sands.

Corinne had seen the two, but was too proud to interrupt a tête-à-tête, and would have passed on with a wave of her hand but Lucien went to meet her.

"Corinne," he said, "will you not come in the boat with us? The tide is not yet far enough out for you to get to the fisheries, and Marcelline will go if you do."

Marcelline's wish was enough for the sturdy cousin, as Lucien knew it would be. Love for her was the one bond of union between these dissimilar natures. She had never done anything in particular to deserve it, had just been her gentle, cheerful self, and they worshipped her.

"If Marcelline wants to go on the water, I need not hurry myself. I can go too," said Corinne, and forthwith the three embarked in the clumsy boat which moved steadily enough with the sail up, though the tide was so far out that it bumped several times on the large boulders before reaching the main current of the river. Truly it was a tame affair, this going boating with Lucien compared to last summer, when Antoine had taken the girls out with him on the roughest days, when the motion was like tobogganning on a steep hillside. Marcelline remembered that once they had stuck fast on the huge boulder over there whose head was now far out of the water, and Antoine had at once jumped out into the river up to his shoulders, and by sheer strength had lifted the boat off. He was too impulsive, that Antoine. Why could he not stay at home and be sensible?

"Look at the seal, Marcelline," said Lucien, breaking in upon her thoughts, "over there, sunning himself on the rock."

He was light brown on the back, and showed greyish white below as he slid off into the water at their approach. Lucien was well-informed, could indeed read English, and told the girls many interesting things about the habits of the seal, and also of the porpoises that were tumbling in the distance; but what was that compared to Antoine's bold dash after the animals themselves?

They stayed out till the sun drew near the edge of the high hills behind the village, shining red on the tinned church steeple. Then Lucien brought the boat to the edge of the mudflats which extended nearly a mile from the shore, and, the tide being almost far out, besides the anchor he put two iron supports at her sides to keep the boat from tipping over when the water left her high and dry.

"You stay here, demoiselles, while I go ashore, and I shall bring out the hay-cart to drive you in."

So saying, Lucien took off his shoes and stockings, rolled up his trousers, and scrambling over the side waded and ran towards the mill.

"If Monsieur Lucien thinks I am going to wait to be driven in, he is mistaken," said the independent Corinne, and his back was no sooner turned than she, too, stripped barefoot, tucked up her skirts and splashed away, pail in hand, towards the fisheries to collect any flounders, smelts or sardines that might have been left by the receding tide in the little pool at the angle of the two fences of brushwood.

Marcelline sat still.

"I am honoured ;" she thought, "being driven in ! Antoine has carried me ashore many a time, but of course I could not let Lucien do that. He is not strong enough, for one thing. Antoine is like a giant ; but he can be gentle too. I wonder why he has not written ! Perhaps he will not get tired so soon as they think."

Lucien drove up in the hay-cart, urging his fat Canadian pony, the best-fed horse for miles around, to its utmost speed, which was not great. He had taken time to spread a buffalo robe over the straw in the bottom of the two-wheeled vehicle. Strange to say Lucien never missed Corinne, but drove ashore very slowly, sitting on the front of his cart with feet hanging down at the side, while Marcelline sat in the middle, leaning her yellow hair against the side rail, and through the opposite bars watching the shadows deepen on the purple hills which stood boldly out into the river beyond Baie St. Paul. Something about that familiar scene recalled so forcibly her absent cousin, that she was miles away in thought when Lucien spoke.

"Marcelline," he said, leaning back to look better into the refined, delicate features of his companion.

"Well, Lucien," she replied, without taking her eyes from the distant hills, and the request, whatever it was, died on his lips. He, too, turned his eyes to the dark blue mountains with a look even more wistful than her own.

There was a dance at the Michaud farmhouse that evening. The expected violinist did not turn up till late, but a youth from the village played the accordion, and those who sat round the low-ceiled kitchen stamped their feet in time. The men

danced together and then the maidens, in cotillion figures. Lucien went on his knee to Madame, asking leave to dance with Marcelline, but the aunt was obdurate. None but married women might dance with the men. There were no round dances, but Monsieur and Madame, as straight and supple almost as any young couple in the room, went through some steps facing each other. When Madame was tired, her married daughter skipped lightly into her place to keep the measure going, and when the perspiration broke forth on Monsieur's brow, a younger man came to the front, and so on, thus changed places until all had had a turn.

The company sang in the intervals, and Lucien, who had a tenor voice naturally light and sweet, excelled himself in "*Les yeux bleus et les yeux noirs*." The blue eyes were evidently his favourites, for ever and anon he glanced at Marcelline, while poor Corinne wrestled desperately with a strange new feeling which made her feel something akin to hatred for her gentle cousin.

About nine o'clock there was a fresh arrival, the belated violin player. He must surely have been the worse for liquor, or he would not have blurted out there, before them all, the news he had heard at the wharf :

"The schooner that Antoine went away on has sunk just below Todonsac. She was a leaky boat ; no one was saved."

"But Antoine ! Surely he is not drowned !"

"That I know not. The boat touched at Todonsac. He may have got off there. If so, he will soon be home."

"Oh, yes !" said the father. "He was sure to land there. He would know by that time the boat was not safe."

"Ah, yes," said Madame, "Antoine is the bad penny that always turns up."

"He knows he cannot be spared longer from home," said Corinne ; but Marcelline said nothing. Only Lucien noticed that her face grew white as the folds of her kerchief ; and, when next he looked towards her chair, it was empty. Pulling his cap drearily down to his eyes, and without a farewell word to any one, young Potvin strode out into the darkness with an old pain renewed in his heart.

"She does care for him, after all !"

It seemed so indeed when day after day brought no news of the wanderer, and Marcelline drooped like a lily whose stem is broken down near the root. She lost her

appetite, the colour left her face; but her eyes glowed a deeper blue from the centre of dark rings.

The hay was more than ready to cut before Monsieur Michaud hired any one to help him with it, for he said:

"Antoine will be here in a few days."

But the haying time passed, and still he came not.

"He has been bound to have his season's fishing after all," said Madame severely. But often she shaded her sunburnt face with her still browner hand, and watched the small sails which now and then dotted the shining river to the east.

"Perhaps he is in that boat rounding the point just now."

Corinne did the work of a man that summer, besides helping her mother indoors; for Marcelline became weaker as the weather grew warmer. She was forced to give up the school. Going up and down the hill was too much for her, and she made the same excuse for neglecting Mass, though she had always been driven there.

It was Corinne then for whom Lucien watched on her way to and from the fisheries to ask daily for Marcelline.

"Lucien," said the girl to him one day, as she rested on the large boulder half-way up the hill, while he sat on the rail fence beside her, "Marcelline grows no better."

"No?" he replied, looking earnestly at the softened face of his companion, which was gaining beauty in his eyes during this anxious time.

"She was spitting blood last night; and such a fit of coughing! It broke my heart."

"I spoke to Dr. Vallère in the village to-day."

"Yes! What did he say, Lucien?"

"He said he feared consumption for Marcelline."

"Oh, Lucien!"

And stout-hearted Corinne bent her sunburnt face into her hands, and let her tears fall among the Tommy cods in her basket. For the first time in his experience Lucien felt himself the stronger of the two. He moved over to the big stone beside her, and gently patted her shoulder.

"Never despair, Corinne! We shall save her yet."

"But how? What can we do?"

"Listen, my friend. There is to be an excursion to Ste. Anne on Monday from here and from Baie St. Paul. We shall take her there."

"But she does not believe—she will not go."

"You and Madame must make her go for your sakes."

"But she is too ill——"

"She may be while she is going away, but coming back she will be better. Do you not remember how Madame Edmond was cured of her rheumatism, and François Tremblay of his lameness? Our good lady of Beaupré loves not them more than us."

"If she will only consent——"

"You must make her, Corinne, though we should have to carry her on board. I shall come for Madame and you two at four o'clock in the morning."

For days Marcelline had been lying in the high four-posted bed which nearly filled her small bedroom, that had a door opening into Corinne's, and another into the sitting-room. It seemed barbarous to insist on her taking that rough ride down to the wharf, but she had grown so light that Corinne carried her easily to the miller's buckboard. There, with a pillow behind her, and Corinne's stout arm and shoulder to rest upon, she made the journey to the wharf with comparatively little fatigue, for Lucien drove slowly.

There were many passengers on the steamer, some going only so far as Baie St. Paul, others bent on pleasure merely, but the larger portion were devout worshippers on their annual pilgrimage. These spoke hopefully to Marcelline of the healing power of the Bonne Sainte Anne, and assured her that she would return on that same boat a different creature. She only smiled a little. She had no faith herself, and was making what she believed to be her final excursion, merely to please her aunt and cousin, who sat one on either side of her as she lay on the lounge in the stuffy little cabin. Through the small window astern she could look out at the St. Lawrence, smooth as glass in the morning sunlight, except the track which the paddle-wheels of the steamer had whipped into foam, and she kept thinking, thinking of the boat which had sailed away in the other direction never to return.

One after another they rounded the bold headlands of the north shore, past the tiny villages with their big churches exactly nine miles apart, till at last the mountain of Ste. Anne came in sight, with the great cathedral at its base looking like a toy church in comparison.

"Was there ever such a long wharf?" Marcelline thought, as she was driven slowly from the boat-side. With hushed voices and silent tread, the formerly noisy,

chattering crowd entered the large silent church, where they were greeted by the tall pyramids of crutches of the cured. There was a special service for the pilgrims; and the white-robed priest, high up at the right-hand side, exhorted them to that faith which could remove mountains.

Upheld by her aunt and cousin, Marcelline tottered to the statue of the Bonne Sainte Anne, and fell on her knees with the group there. In the rebellion of her heart she had asked no spiritual comfort from the Church, and it was more in weakness than in faith that she knelt. As in a dream the familiar words of the Mass fell upon her ears, and she shed bitter tears for her lost love and her blighted life. She had been no great sinner that such desolation should have come upon her. She had neither father nor mother, brother nor sister, and the one on earth dearest to her had been taken away before she knew that she loved him.

Some one of the kneeling crowd jostled her slightly, and looking up resentfully she saw that it was a little blind girl, turning her sightless eyes upwards, while her lips moved as she fingered her beads. On the other side of her was a woman holding a babe, on whom Marcelline saw the stamp of death. The mother held it out to the statue of Sainte Anne, and cried aloud in her agony that the child might be healed. Then there was a man with a misshapen hand, stretching it forth in supplication; another shaking with fever; and a third evidently imbecile, for his eyes roamed restlessly as he kept muttering to himself, and his friends kept hold of him. Others there were, both men and women, all bearing the impress of care and pain, if not otherwise deformed. Such a woeful group Marcelline had never even pictured to herself, and as she bent her head again the tears fell, not for herself alone.

"What am I, O Holy Mother, that I should alone expect to be happy in this world of misery? I have been weak and selfish, make me strong." In token of renunciation she took the treasured locket from her neck, and added it to the host of trophies hung before the Bonne Sainte Anne.

It was a firmer and braver Marcelline who rose to her feet when the service was over. She would not take Corinne's arm

down the passage, and at the Convent near where Madame took her charges, she ate a little without being urged, for the first time since that sad Queen's Birthday.

"Truly a marvellous cure!" said the villagers.

It was a warm, dark, cloudy night, and she persisted in sitting on deck all the way home, watching the phosphorescence on the water. She seemed in a strangely uplifted state, and Lucien and Corinne exchanged joyful whispers that were a little mixed with awe.

It was very late when the home wharf was reached, but no one would have recognised the drooping invalid in the tall fair "demoiselle" with the steady walk. Somebody waiting near the lantern seemed to know her—somebody in a rough sailor dress with face burned even darker than its natural hue. That which Marcelline had renounced was given back to her.

"Antoine!" she cried and held out both hands, while he clasped her close, regardless of Lucien and Corinne, who after the first exclamation stood back—the sister a little jealous that even one so dear as Marcelline should be her restored twin's first thought.

Lucien pressed her hand in the darkness.

"We must be the first to each other now, Corinne."

She nodded her head gravely, but said nothing. Madame was off the steamer by this time and she was not so silent.

"So you have come back, have you, Antoine, now that the haying is over? Where have you been—making us all think you drowned!"

"I did not hear till to-day that the schooner I went from here on was sunk. I was not surprised, for she leaked badly. I left her at Todonsac and went up the Saguenay on another, and I have made enough money to pay for my share of the haying, mother, and to set me and Marcelline up housekeeping, if you will let us get married."

"Humph!" said Madame. "If it had not been for the Bonne Sainte Anne it would be her coffin only you would have to buy."

Antoine pressed more tightly the hand on his arm and whispered in his masculine unbelief:

"What has cured thee, Marcelline? Was it Sainte Anne or Saint Antoine?"

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greytong," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVI. A MOUNTAIN STORM

PENELOPE did not for one moment believe that there was any truth in the old man's words, but, when she was again alone, the idea troubled her as a nightmare might have done. It was not the least likely that there should be money hidden, of which her uncle knew nothing; but suppose such a thing were true, suppose her sacrifice had been in vain! Penelope stamped her foot with indignation even though she was alone, but the next moment she repudiated the bare idea of secret wealth, and blamed herself for entertaining it. She would watch her father closely, and see if the mania returned to him.

Tired out with her thoughts, she at last returned to bed and to sleep, and the next morning she met Philip in the dining-room. They never spoke of the night's events, and when the Duke entered, the three might have been once more in the London house.

State and luxury had replaced the old ways, and the Duke's handsome countenance beamed with quiet delight. This was the life which he had desired and sought for. He and Penelope had raised the crumbling edifice once more from its threatened ruin. They had conquered fate.

No stranger could have guessed from Philip's demeanour that everything was not perfect with him in his marriage. His attentions were never wanting, and he

talked to the Duke as if at this moment life were a very pleasant experience. He must respect Penelope's wishes, even if these came near to breaking his heart. He was supported by the hope, present every minute of the day to him, the hope of winning her yet.

"I cannot blame her," he would often think; "she tried to make me understand and I would not do so. I am alone to blame, alone."

When he knew Penelope was in her sitting-room busy about her work, he would wander forth alone and ponder over his ruined life. Where was his energy, and what had become of his hopes of working for the good of others? The very state and riches that now surrounded the Palace were distasteful to him. He preferred the simplicity at which he and Forster had always aimed. Perhaps he ought to have resisted the infatuation which had led him into this false position; he ought to have chosen the life of self-sacrifice. But these thoughts at other times appeared unworthy of him. He loved Penelope with the love and worship which a knight of old might have given to the lady of his choice. He must accept the pains and penalties of his love, and some day—all his meditations ended thus—some day all would come right.

In the meantime he and the Duke were excellent clerks of the works. Now that money was forthcoming, there were plenty of ways of spending it. The only difficulty arose from the various moods of the King. For days he would remain in his room, then he would suddenly emerge, at night prowling around the castle, and by day wandering about the glen near by. Hammer in hand he would creep round the premises, tapping the stones and looking for some-

thing. The faithful Jim Oldcorn constituted himself the King's keeper, and for hours he would patiently follow him, helping him in his imaginary search for hid treasure. But if the King by chance met Philip, then a strange rage seemed to take possession of him; his muttered curses and his invectives were painful to hear, and the only cure was for Philip to take himself as soon as possible out of his father-in-law's presence.

To the outward eye, life at the Palace was now by no means an unpleasant thing. Besides luxury of the ordinary type, the Duke was glad enough to take Philip out shooting or fishing, and the joys of sport were compensating elements in his lonely life. His favourite pastime was to wander forth alone to the tarn high up on the big mountain, and there to fish for hours in the wild solitude. Here he watched the clouds hurrying by, speculating on the mystery of life, and his own life in particular, till the moment when the trout had to be landed, and then all sorrows passed away in the excitement of the moment.

One day as he sat near the tarn, he saw in the distance a figure making for the edge of one of the mountain spurs. He felt sure that it was Penelope going up the great mountain alone. Hidden behind some grey boulders, he watched her with an intense longing to be near her. The path was not without danger, but the Princess, he knew, was well accustomed to climbing her own mountains, and as she mounted the steep slope, Philip wondered if there were on earth another woman as beautiful as this one. He saw her at last reach the narrow path on the edge. From this point there was stiff climbing among boulders, heaped up and rising higher on each other till the summit was reached. Presently he saw that something had happened, for the Princess stood still, and Philip guessed that she had somehow found herself in such a position that she could neither go up nor get down. In a moment he left his rod, hurried across the ledge, and began hastily to climb the slope. It was steep and difficult, but shorter than going round to the beginning of the ascent. As Philip climbed he heard the low rumble of distant thunder. This made him strain every nerve to reach Penelope. Being so much beneath her she had not seen him, and it was only when he was close beside her that the Princess was aware of her husband's presence.

"What is the matter? I saw you could not get on," he exclaimed.

Penelope blushed. She hated to be found in this helpless condition, and by Philip, too!

"Yes, I can't get up or down, and there is a storm coming on." Penelope laughed a little.

"I will climb above you, and then I think I can get you up. To jump down might be dangerous."

There was some danger for Philip, but he never gave that a thought. Soon he was in a position to help his wife, and after a few moments he had lifted her up to another ledge. Ten minutes' more climbing brought them safely to the top. But the storm had travelled more swiftly than they had climbed. Hardly had they stepped upon the flat summit than the heavy black cloud seemed to burst over their heads. The lightning flashed forth down the pathway of the rain, and the husband and wife seemed to be mere powerless atoms in the war of heaven.

"Come quickly," said Penelope, taking her husband's arm. "There is a shelter on the top; we must get under the wall." Clinging to each other they staggered forward. Never had either of them witnessed such a storm. The lightning was appalling, the thunder echoed round the mighty circle of mountain-tops.

In five minutes they reached the shelter, such as it was, and crouched under the wall. Every now and again the clouds were riven, and a view of distant mountains and lakes revealed, as if by the help of a magician's wand, all the beautiful country which lay spread out before them; but the next instant the clouds swept over the scene, and all was again dark.

Philip was so proud that Penelope had accepted his help, that he blessed the storm, and as he tried to shelter her he longed for the moment when he might fold her in his loving arms. Now, however, he dared not do so; there was a barrier between them.

"You will catch cold, dearest," he said presently, for the stone bench on which the rain had beaten down was a chilly resting-place.

"Let us go home, then," said Penelope, rising; but at that moment a loud thunder-clap followed by a flash of brilliant forked lightning forced her to retreat again.

"I have never seen such a storm as this," she said. "It is very grand."

"And very awful," added Philip. "I

can't bear to think what you would have done if I had not been below at the tarn."

"Somebody would have come after a time," she said, "but I am glad you were there. It was a foolish position to have got into."

"Penzie, if you would let me always help you," he said softly, but Penelope turned her head away and pretended not to hear.

"We must get home; uncle saw me go out, he will be anxious."

When at last they could venture forth, Penelope was forced to accept Philip's help to get down the dangerous rocky ledge, which was a much nearer way home than following the pony track. And when they had safely accomplished this task, and once more stood on the mountain ledge where the tarn nestled, Penelope, though wet through, was none the worse for the adventure. As for Philip, he was comparatively happy. He picked up his forsaken rod and the basket of trout; then the two walked home down the mountain slope, always having in sight far below them the trees of the Rothery glen. At last the storm ceased, only the distant rumbling of thunder was audible, and occasionally pale lightning was seen far away over the distant hill-tops.

When they reached the glen gate, Penzie was rather weary, and she voluntarily placed her hand on Philip's arm. At this moment it seemed almost sweet to her to find this support ready for her, and always willing to bear her burdens. Was the time coming when she should get to look forward to seeing Philip near her? She felt very lonely and desolate at times, and he was always good and patient with her.

Some such thoughts came slowly to her mind, and made her lean more heavily on Philip's arm, and he, looking at her sideways, hardly dared to believe his eyes, as he saw a softer expression on the face of his Princess. They had reached in silence the middle of the glen, for the roar of the Rothery utterly prevented any conversation, when Penelope, looking up, saw a tall, manly form coming towards them. The hand on Philip's arm trembled a little, and Penelope paused. Philip, too, made an exclamation of surprise as Forster strode quickly up to them.

"Oh! I am glad to meet you. No one knew where you were, Philip, and the storm had made the Duke anxious about your safety." Forster held out his hand to Penelope, who, loosening her hold on Philip's arm, only murmured an astonished greeting.

"You are surprised, I see, but I have made hasty plans, and I wanted to consult you—both of you. So I left my people in London and came on here."

Then Penelope, looking at Forster, felt that this was indeed the man whom she could have loved, and the other—oh, Heaven! the other was bound to her.

"You are welcome," she said; but Philip no longer felt Penelope's hand resting on his arm.

CHAPTER XXVII. NOT WANTED.

PHILIP and Forster were deep in conversation that evening in the library, whilst Penelope was sitting in the drawing-room with her uncle. She wanted to make sure that her father had no real ground for his mania about hidden treasure.

"You are sure, uncle, that it cannot be true?" she was saying for the second time.

"True, Penzie! Impossible! There was an old tradition that your great-aunt left some treasure, but that was made up merely to account for her ghost. No, believe me, do you think if I had believed in it that I should have left a stone unturned?"

"I am glad you say that, because—oh! uncle, you know that I promised to obey you for the sake of our house, but then—I hardly understood all that it meant."

"Philip is all, and more than all, I thought he would be. A more generous man hardly lives."

"Yes. I know he is generous—very generous."

"You have no cause to repent?"

"No—no, because we were poor, you know; because, uncle, there was no other way; but suppose there had been hidden treasure or any hoarded money my father knew about, oh, then—then I could not forgive him."

"It is quite impossible, make your mind easy. By the way, what has Forster come for? A fine fellow, but he should have been a parson."

"We asked him to come, you know, when we were abroad; and Philip misses his friend."

"I think you certainly come first."

"But I have lost my liberty," she said under her breath.

"The matrimonial chain does not weigh very heavily, and besides, use can almost change our nature."

"With a man's nature, perhaps; I miss my freedom."

"You will sigh for the fetters some years hence, Princess."

"Never. We Winakells are not easily conquered."

Presently the friends entered the drawing-room.

"What do you think of the Palace, Forster?" asked the Duke, in his usual pleasant manner. "Has Philip been doing the honours?"

"It is most beautiful. Everything is as it should be—or will be. It seems almost profane to come here to ask Philip's advice about ordinary matters."

Then Forster gradually drew Penelope aside, into one of the deep window embrasures, whilst Philip continued a building conversation with the Duke.

"I came here to consult you too, Mrs. Winakell," he said slowly, looking out at the moon now appearing mistily through soft grey clouds. "You encouraged my plans, and I have resolved to start at once. I have thought deeply about it, and I have decided to begin a labour home in Africa on a small scale. I shall become one of the toilers, and the men will not look upon me as their task-master, but as their equal. That will make all the difference. I am come to say good-bye."

"Your mother, what will she say?" answered Penelope, glad that the dim light hid her face.

"She is a mother in a thousand; besides, I shall come back in a few years. It may be sooner. Everything depends upon the way my first men prosper."

Penzie's heart beat fast.

"Ask Philip to go with you," she said eagerly. "He is so devoted to you."

"But you—oh, no, it cannot be."

"I am not one to hinder him—besides——" how she longed to tell him that Philip was nothing to her, nothing.

"Besides what?"

"He is in a difficult position here; my father dislikes his being here so much. It is a sick man's fancy, of course, but, but——"

"Poor Philip—I am sorry, but then how could you leave your father?"

"Leave him?"

"I mean that of course your presence will be everything to us, but it would perhaps be wrong to expect——"

"I cannot go; no, I cannot, of course. Even if my father were well, I have no vocation for that life."

"You would soon like it."

"No, no—I must not, I cannot go, but do take Philip. Beg him to go and he will go. I am sure it will be best, till——"

"I cannot ask him," said Forster, looking slightly down on the woman he had once hoped to make his wife. She was Philip's wife now, and as such, a being apart from any dream of his own; but he could not understand her conduct.

When Philip came up to them he began at once to try and solve the mystery.

"Philip, your wife is suggesting that you should come with me. I think it is very good of her. Ah! if you were both coming."

Philip stooped, and pretended to pick up something on the floor; when he spoke it was in a quiet tone.

"I have been wondering what you would do without me! You see I am still conceited enough to believe that I can be of some use."

"But you could not come so soon after your——"

"If Penelope thinks it my duty, she will not keep me." He spoke quite slowly and calmly. No one knew the effort he was making. "What do you think?" he added, turning towards her.

"You must do just what you think best, but if Mr. Bethune really wants you, I do not see why you should not go."

"Do you really think so?" he asked, and Forster fancied there was a tone of pleading in his voice.

"It might be better, because—because of my father."

"But for you?" said Philip in spite of himself.

"I shall nurse my father, and keep uncle company. I could not leave them."

"When do you start, Forster?"

"I have already taken up the land. Jack has been helping. He rather likes the idea of its being called after his name—'Rookwood Colony.' We shall of course be called the Rookery; but I mean to make the world see what a settlement should be like. There must be no assumption of superiority. I shall till my land and try to make my fortune, equally with my neighbour. I expect the men will beat me. The start once made in a proper way, we can get others in without fear of swamping the enterprise by lazy men."

"I will give you my answer to-morrow," said Philip. Then the conversation became general, and Penelope asked after Dora and Adela, with special enquiries for Mrs. Bethune, and this evening she looked more animated than she had done since her return.

Philip noticed it, and stifled a sigh.

That evening he stood by the window of the upstairs sitting-room till Penelope entered, after saying good-night to her uncle.

"Tell me, dearest, do you want me to go?"

"I have no right to dictate," she said slowly.

"But you think it best?"

"Yes. Your presence makes my father worse."

"Then I will go; but, dearest, when I am gone, who will remind you of me?"

He took her hand and kissed it.

"I am not likely to forget you. It will be much better for you to see more of life."

"I will go, and when I come back you may be in need of me. I shall leave everything in order, in case——"

"Oh, you will not be gone for long. In these days a voyage to Africa is nothing."

He said no more and left her, and then Penelope heaved a sigh of relief. She would be free from his presence for a time at least.

It was of course whispered in the Palace that there was something very strange about the marriage of the Princess, but these whispers never reached her, and the feeling of loyalty was so strong that no hint of the truth found its way to the neighbourhood.

But the departure of Philip could not be hidden. He gave out that he was going away for a short time on business; but then it must be very urgent business that takes a man away from a beautiful young wife. If there was a fault, it must be the stranger's iniquity, and in private Betty and Jim Oldcorn discussed it. They would rather have bitten off their tongues than have uttered a word in the presence of the new and grand domestics with whom they were at open feud.

Forster put off his departure for two days, so that Philip might start with him. The conversation turned on land, on building, on implements. Forster seemed to regain his old spirits, now that Philip was to be his companion. Penelope herself was happier, and gave a helping hand to the preparations, living in the present pleasure of watching Forster, and wondering why fate had so cruelly deceived her. Philip, too, was glad to be once more of use in the world, once more with his friend and leader—for his was a wonderful devotion—but underneath the outside excitement was the ever-gnawing thought,

"Will she forget me if I go away, or will my obedience to her wishes make her love me?"

The King had been very quiet since Forster's arrival. He had not appeared at all in public, and had wandered less at night. Penelope hoped the fancy for hidden treasure was passing away.

The last evening came—a fine warm autumn evening. The sunset had shed a golden hue over the russet leaves, and here and there the Rothery caught glimpses of the sky, and reflected the glory of its gold.

Penelope had superintended Philip's packing, which was modest enough, and leaving him with Forster she called Nero, and took her favourite walk up the glen. Her step was lighter than it had been for a long time; she felt as if the past few months were blotted from her memory, and as if her light-heartedness were coming back. She had not gone far when she was stopped by seeing her father walking in front of her. Jim Oldcorn was with him, but the two did not hear her till Penelope came up to them.

"It is getting late and damp, father," she said. "You should not be out."

"I was waiting for you, Penelope. Leave me, Oldcorn. The Princess will come home with me."

Penelope turned back, sorry to have missed getting to the top of the glen.

"So you've had company," said the old man, hobbling beside her. "A fine young man. I've seen him though he didn't see me. Why did you not marry him, Penelope? Eh?"

"He was poor. I married, as you know, to save the house."

"What nonsense! You and your uncle are a couple of fools, that's what you are. Did I ever ask you to marry a man who is no better than a tradesman? Since when have the Winskells wed with those beneath them?"

"I cannot listen to such talk," said Penelope sternly.

"You are proud, I know it, I know it, and you hate him. You thought you would go your own ways and I let you go. Your brother knew better. Why was he killed? A girl is of no use, no use at all."

"Of no use! Look at our house now. Who has made the Palace habitable?"

"You and your uncle have amused yourselves, but I won't have that low-born fellow about the place. I'm King yet, I'm King yet."

"You forget, father, that I bought the lands that were about to fall into the hands of the mortgagees," said Penelope.

"I tell you, you amused yourself. Listen, Penelope. Tell me where I have put it. I could buy it all back if—if—the devil take it, I can't remember the place. I know it, I alone and your brother, and now he's dead."

"You imagined it, father. There is no treasure except such as my marriage supplied."

"Your marriage. Ha! ha!" and the King laughed.

"My uncle says so."

"Greybarrow is a fool. His fine ways and his learning take you in. Books! what's the use of books? Your books did not save the estate. Penelope, if you would help me to remember, I could help you even now."

"Help me. How?"

"To get rid of that man. You hate him—don't I see it?—and so do I."

Penelope stood still.

"He is going away with his friend. I don't want any one's help."

But the idea took shape in her mind:

"If we only had wealth I could repay him, and—and—I could be free."

The King continued:

"But if we could find it. I tell you it is somewhere, and I shall find it."

It seemed to Penelope as if the tempter were asking her to sell her soul.

When she turned round she saw that her father's mood had changed, and he had hurried away into the Palace garden. At the same moment, a tall figure came towards her. She felt that it was Forster, even before he came up to her.

"I am glad to have found you, Mrs. Winkell," he said. "I wanted to speak to you."

AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPEMENTS.

A SHORT time ago, at a meeting of the Royal Colonial Institute, a paper was read by the Honourable James Inglis, Chairman of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, on the "Recent Economic Developements of Australian Enterprise"—that is, the development of new industries, and the more economic working of the old—which presents Australia and her resources in so novel an aspect to most of us, that we have to confess our utter ignorance of our distant colony. In passing, let it be under-

stood that by Australia not only is the main continent meant, but the adjacent islands which go to make up New Zealand are included. Mr. Inglis, in starting his subject, avows that it is his object to draw the attention of Englishmen to the splendid opportunities which are offered for determined hard work, and what golden prizes are to be won; "what chances it has for honourable and profitable careers, and what new avenues are even now being opened for brave hearts and willing hands to build up at least comfortable homes, if not great fortunes, and to take a share in the building up this Greater Britain."

But before we come to these developments, what is our idea of the Australian climate? It is most probably new to us to be told—perhaps we have never even thought of it—that in the one colony of New South Wales, in parts, the inhabitants experience a winter like Canada and a summer like Jamaica. In Klandra, a mining town on the borderland between New South Wales and Victoria, there is no communication with the outside world for four months in the year, except by the use of snow-shoes. Snow-shoe races are organised, and the mail man has to use these means of locomotion. At the same time in Queensland the sun will be pouring down in overpowering strength, drying up all before him and making water dearer than wine. To continue the tale of this diversity of climate, in part of Northern Queensland the rainfall and vegetation is not unlike that of Ceylon; in the northern rivers of New South Wales cane brakes flourish, as moist and luxuriant as in Jamaica; in the west of the same colony a long file of camels laden with merchandise has become a common object; and in Tasmania, Assam hybrid tea plants grow side by side with barley, maize, or potatoes.

So much for the diversity of climate; now for the developments which are being attempted in order to take advantage of that climate. We, of course, are in the habit of considering Australia as one vast pasturage ground. So it was in former times, and agriculture was neglected, but now the change is being made. In Mr. Inglis's words, the great agricultural age is at hand. The selector and the husbandman are invading the pastoral tracts. Thousands upon thousands of acres, formerly pasturage, now grow grain. It may be remarked in this connection that Forestry is a recognised State department; that millions of olive, cedar, cork, oak, and mulberry trees have

been planted; that all the existing valuable timbers—the gum forests, the cedar lands in the north, the hard wood of the interior—belong for the most part to the State, and that in them the colonies have an almost incalculable asset. But this by the way. Let us return to the wave of agriculture. In New Zealand in five months, one hundred and forty thousand souls have been put on the land, and only fifty allotments have been abandoned out of all those applied for. In Victoria the scrub lands have been pierced with railways, and lands which were thought to be worthless are rapidly being reclaimed. In Gippsland, hemp, flax, jute, and China grass are being cultivated, and to ensure good seed the Government supply it to those who desire to make proper experiments.

The great Central Division of New South Wales is about to be thrown open to farmers, not, to quote from the "Sydney Mail," "that the land heretofore held in great squattages has been eaten out, or has failed to support sheep, but it is found that the best of this country is adapted for agriculture, which is more remunerative than stock. Accordingly, great areas have been given up by the pastoralists for wheat-growing, on such terms as make the owner and the tenant sharers in failure or success."

The people of Australia, too, are learning that crowding into a few towns is not the way to success, and the outcome is a large increase of what Mr. Inglis calls family or cottage settlement. It is true that large areas of wheat lands are taken up by capitalists; but a wonderful activity is displayed in many minor industries. Vineyards, orange groves, fruit orchards, bee keeping, poultry raising, market gardening, horticulture, silk farming, are being made fresh avenues for employment; while perfume factories, distilleries for eucalyptus oil, jam factories, cornflour factories, fruit drying and preserving, and many other industries are springing up in large numbers.

But one of the most important factors in this agricultural wave is the discovery of artesian water in the west, which has added to the empire, without strife or bloodshed, a territory as large as Matabeleland—a territory which was supposed to be impossible of cultivation for lack of water, but which in fact has been found to cover an almost inexhaustible supply. From one of these artesian wells no less than three million gallons of water is obtained

per day; from another there runs a regular river over one hundred miles long, which at the bore is twenty feet wide and six feet deep; while from others lagoons and inland lakes have formed. And this vast area—Mr. Inglis computes it as at least thirty million acres suitable and open to the operations of the small settler—has been turned into a land with a soil rich beyond description. In summing up his account of this agricultural development, Mr. Inglis dwells on these points as indisputable: "that the area of our lands fit for productive occupation has been immensely enlarged; that agricultural settlement is everywhere rapidly increasing; that cottage industries and 'petite culture' are increasing in a like ratio; and that Australia is rapidly entering on a period of greatly augmented productiveness, of accelerated industry, of a rapid expansion of her export trade, and of increased activity and prosperity. The opportunities for promising investment of capital and labour are such as cannot be excelled by any other land with which I have any acquaintance, and the best proof lies in the readiness with which the colonists themselves are backing the sanguine outlook by their vigorous prosecution of new enterprises, no less than by their plucky fortitude in braving reverses which, I believe, are only temporary, and which have been in great measure produced by causes quite beyond the immediate control of the colonists themselves." Such, then, is Mr. Inglis's account of the agricultural development, such is his sanguine outlook for the future. Sanguine indeed it is, but who shall say it is too sanguine if the work is attacked with industry and perseverance?

Passing on we come to Dairy Produce, which of late has been very successful, and in Mr. Inglis's paper this success is attributed to one of the features of this new industrial development—the increase and extension of the co-operative principle. To illustrate this principle of co-operation, which we are told has made the butter and cheese-making enterprise a success, and has contributed largely to the rise of the frozen mutton trade in New Zealand, the one case of the Bernina District Cold Climate Farm Dairy Company is instanced. At the annual meeting last February it was reported that during the previous six months the sales had amounted to thirty-four thousand eight hundred and sixty-four pounds. The profits showed a dividend of twenty per cent., a bonus of three shillings per share,

and bonus to the consignors of one-half per cent. of the produce sent for sale, while a balance of four hundred and thirty-nine pounds was carried forward. The same principle is carried out in the great Sugar Company of Sydney. Here, as in the dairy factories, the farmers raise the product, and the company's mills do the rest. Soap and candle works and wool-washing establishments are worked in the same way, and Mr. Inglis would like to see the system generally taken up—in indigo, tea, coffee, rape, mustard, and linseed oil. He would have the farmers combine to run a central mill, each farmer guaranteeing a minimum of raw material, and the co-operative mill would do the rest, while each circle of producers or combination of circles would have their own agency for sale, shipping, and insurance.

In the old industries, too, the same revival is witnessed. The wool trade is carried on under better circumstances. The breeds are being improved; new fodder plants are constantly being experimented with; and with better means of improving the pasturage, the grazing industry is carried on more efficiently and economically than ever before. In another old industry, the economical improvements and developments are wonderful. In Hillgrove, which Mr. Inglis represents in Parliament, ten years ago there was one antimony-and-gold mine worked in haphazard, wasteful fashion. "The rich veins only were worked. The ore was roasted on open bonfires on the bare hillside, and all the antimony was dissipated in fumes, and there was enough gold lost in the tailings to make handsome dividends for shareholders under modern management." Now the ores are burnt in furnaces of most approved patterns, and a flourishing town takes the place of the one slab hut of ten years ago. In many such mines the tailings of the olden times are being worked in scientific manner, and are yielding up treasures almost equal to the original product of the mines, while in Tasmania has been discovered "a veritable mountain of practically pure oxide of iron, with coal and limestone close by. This ore, tested, has been found to contain ninety-nine per cent. of oxide of iron."

But the last discovery on which Mr. Inglis touches reads almost too marvellous and valuable. We have to picture busy collieries at Tilbury Dock, in relation to Wales or Newcastle, and we can have an idea of what this discovery means. A

seam of coal has been struck, some ten feet thick, on one of the main promontories of Sydney Harbour. The depth is considerable—nine hundred yards—but shallow when we take into consideration that the Royal Commission of Mines has laid down one thousand five hundred yards as a workable depth. The coal is good, and the importance of the discovery lies in the fact that it can be shipped into the largest steamers at a saving of some three shillings per ton on the average cost of carriage and handling from the nearest existing collieries. Experts report that no practical difficulties exist, the cover being sound sandstones and conglomerates, without a flaw or break, and absolutely dry. Mr. Inglis sums up this discovery as follows:

"I am not indulging in vain rhetoric when I say that in the whole world there will be no other metropolitan city with a coal-mine in operation within its town boundaries, and in such favourable position that the coal can be rolled down the shoots from the pit's mouth into the largest ocean-going steamers, lying not a cable's length away. Cheap coal, with quick despatch, means a great impetus to the trade of the colony, and can be computed in plain, matter-of-fact figures by the least imaginative." It does indeed read like a fairy tale.

Such are the main features of a most interesting paper which Mr. Inglis winds up with a forecast, in wishing the success of which we can all join him, that "ere the advent of a new century the progress of Australia in all that constitutes true national greatness will be found—under a federated flag, in close union with the dear old Motherland—such as will eclipse in brilliancy and stability all that has ever yet been chronicled of our wondrous Anglo-Saxon race, even in the days of our quickest expansion and of our most splendid achievements."

Such is Mr. Inglis's forecast, which may be objected to as being too hopeful and sanguine; but it is formed from the experience and opinions of one who for thirty years has been watching the growth, difficulties, and what he now believes to be the approaching triumph of Australia. We have a large market for her food supplies over here, and the more we can depend upon our colonies for such supplies in the place of depending upon the supplies of foreign countries, the better for the safety and prosperity of our great Empire.

IN THE BOX TUNNEL.

A TALE OF TO-DAY.

MRS. EDWARD SOMERSET paced up and down the platform at Paddington in company with half-a-dozen of her dearest friends who had come to see her off on the first railway journey she had ever undertaken by herself. For in a small, a very small way, she had become quite a heroine in the eyes of a certain set, the pioneer of the downtrodden, much misunderstood British Matron; and as such received not a little adulation and éclat from those of her friends who yearned yet feared to break off the dreaded marital yoke, and those of them who had never had any husbands at all, but were quite sure that if they had they should not be husbands worth speaking of. Helen Somerset felt very proud of herself as she waited for the west-country train that lovely autumn day, upheld as she was by the applause of the half-dozen women around her, and not a little astonished, if pleased, at her own independence. Foremost amongst her friends, and those by whose advice she had mainly acted, were Agatha Albany and Lillian Barton, the first a handsome, stylish-looking woman of an uncertain age, who had the emancipation of her sex greatly at heart; and the latter, a pretty, laughing girl of eighteen, who had joined the movement as she would a tennis club, and for the same reason—that she expected to find it “Awful fun, you know.”

It was Lillian, commonly called Lil, who broke the silence next.

“Oh! if this is not the very biggest joke I was ever in, Nell. But tell me where, when, and how was the deed of separation—beg pardon, Agatha, I mean the declaration of freedom—signed?”

“The what?” asked her friend, a little uneasily, her colour coming and going, and her eyes fixed upon a nearly new port-manteau and Gladstone, with E. S. upon them in big white letters.

“The deed, you know. Come, Nellie, tell us all about it. I do wish I could have been present myself, it must have been such fun. How did he look, and what did you say, and did you shake hands when you parted for ever and say you bore each other no malice, or what?”

“If you mean the deed of separation, Lil, it was signed at Ted’s—I mean Mr. Somerset’s—lawyer’s, somewhere in the Temple,” and Helen sighed a little. No,

they had certainly not said good-bye as she had wished to at that interview.

“The Temple!” repeated Miss Albany. “A fitting name indeed for the place where such a deed was signed; far more suitable to be called such, than the places in which the so-called rites of matrimony are celebrated! Let me congratulate you, my dear Helen, upon being so far superior to the prejudices of your sex, as to be one of the first to throw off the wretched chains of——”

“Yes; thank you, Agatha. I dare say it’s all right enough,” interrupted Mrs. Somerset. “I wonder, I do wonder if that stupid porter has labelled my things properly.”

“He is bound to do so by the laws of the Company,” said Miss Albany a little severely; she did not like her speeches to be interfered with and broken into, when she had once “got steam up,” as Lillian profanely called it; and she had been about to give the rest of her party the benefit of a speech, or rather a portion of one, that she was going to read that night in her capacity as chairwoman of the “Anti-Matrimonial Alliance of Emancipated Females.” “But still, I always see it done myself; there is no trusting a man in anything!”

“I suppose I ought to have seen to it myself also, but Ted—other people, I mean, have always done all this for me. And I haven’t even a maid with me to-day. It was stupid of Lemaire to go and get ill to-day of all days.”

“But it is jolly to be travelling all by oneself,” cried Lillian. “You can have such fun, perhaps pick up some one nice to look after your things for you; there’s no telling. Now you have gone through the what-you-may-callums in the Temple of what’s-his-name, as Agatha calls it, you are quite independent. In fact, you may say you are starting off for the new ‘up-to-date’ honeymoon all by yourself. Quite a new departure, Nell; but I don’t know, I really do not know,” and the speaker shook a curly head, “but what the old way was better. Oh, dear me, yes, in some ways, not in all, the old plan had its advantages. But perhaps you are only having fun, and will make it up again with Ted Somerset soon?”

Helen’s fair face flamed up hotly.

“I do wish, Lillian, you would not persist in looking at the whole affair in the light of a vulgar everyday man and wife quarrel. You must please regard it from

quite another standpoint. Mr. Somerset and I have agreed to part for several reasons; he is—well, he is altogether absurd in his ideas of married life, which he seems to think ought to be at the best a kind of gilded slavery, and considers it quite enough for a woman to be fed, clothed, and to have a more or less comfortable home. And I, with my idea of the higher life in store for our sex, could not be content with this. In fact, we agreed in nothing but to separate. I won't be domineered over by any man."

"Quite right too, dear Helen," urged Miss Albany. "And I am a proud woman to-day if any poor words of mine have led you to this decision, and persuaded you, in the sacred name of womanhood, not to bear any more with the caprices of an unreasonable man, who happens for the time being to be your legalised tyrant."

"O-oh!" Lily Barton drew a long breath. "You do put things so well, Agatha. But, Nell, what would you do if you were to meet Ted—it would be just a little awkward, wouldn't it?"

"Behave as I should to any other man I know slightly," replied her friend reprovingly, and then got very pink, as a tall, fair man, followed by a porter, came up and took possession of the portmanteau and Gladstone which had seemed, with reason, so strangely familiar to her. An amused smile was on his face as he surveyed the group before him; then, raising his hat, he walked off, taking his way towards the train which had just come up, unobserved by the others, who had been talking fast with their backs to it.

"Don't you bow when you meet any one you know?" enquired Lillian. "Oh, Nell, Nell, you both looked awfully ashamed of yourselves!"

But Helen was mercifully saved the trouble of replying. Miss Albany came bravely to the rescue, declaring that Helen only showed proper pride by declining to take any notice of her husband, and that she was glad to see Mr. Somerset looked thoroughly guilty, as indeed he well might do.

"Yes, that's it, I tried to, but—but—Oh, dear Agatha, do you think this is the train?—and I cannot see that porter anywhere. I wish I'd thought to ask Ted, he always looked after the things; I mean—I mean," she added, seeing Agatha's face of stern astonishment, "it would be so awkward to get to the Pengellys' and have no things, you know!"

Lillian burst out laughing.

"You will be the death of me, Nell! I should think that under present circumstances even Agatha would not have the cheek to ask a 'put away' spouse to look after her things for her."

"I cannot conceive ever finding myself in similar circumstances, Lillian," Miss Albany was beginning to say, when her speech was cut short by a cry of: "Take your seats, please, take your seats, this way for the express. Where for, lady!" And Helen, still vainly looking for the truck containing "her things," was bundled into a carriage, her friends trying to pacify her by promising to go and look up the recalcitrant porter. Presently, to her great joy, they returned with the news that the boxes were safely in the rear van, but they were only just in time to say good-bye, and the train was beginning to move when Lily, who seemed to have some private joke on, put her head in at the carriage window.

"Good-bye, Nell, take care of yourself," she cried. "And I say, don't be frightened, but the 'legalised tyrant' is in the next compartment!"

The train steamed out of the station, gathering speed as it left bricks and mortar behind it, and tore away into the green country, where the hedgerows were already decked in the russet and gold of their autumn garb; and Helen was left to her own reflections, not altogether pleasant ones either, to judge by the pucker between her brows, which was certainly not caused by any paragraph in the journal she was reading. Presently the paper was laid down, and she gave herself up to dreamily gazing out of the window, where meadows, hedgerows, and villages were passing rapidly before her eyes. And somehow in like manner her married life began to unfold its past, and each succeeding scene to unroll itself before her "mind's eye" once more. She saw the lavender hedge in the old-fashioned garden, where Ted first spoke of love; she could even distinguish the scent of the pale blue spikey blossoms; she heard anew the congratulations of her friends and relations. For her love-story had all run smoothly until, by her own act, she had written "finis" at the end of the first volume, and closed the book for ever. In fancy, too, she stood again in her white robes in the village church, faltering out the solemn words "Till death us do part." But it was not death that had parted

them at last; indeed, when she came to think of it, Helen could hardly tell what had done so. There had been a man's hasty temper and a woman's self-will; a few bitter words, forgotten almost as soon as spoken by one, that rankled for ever in the other's mind—many little grievances which culminated in that interview in the lawyer's chambers only a week ago.

"Till death!" Helen always hated to think of death; it was a word that seemed to have nothing to do with Ted and herself in their vigorous young life, so full of health and happiness. If she ever thought of it at all, she removed it to some dim future, when even she would be old and grey, but still have Ted's hand to cling tightly to, and Ted's arms to hold her fast till she could feel no more. She was always, however, a coward when she thought of death, this poor heroine of our tale—not a proper heroine at all, I fear—for even in her most unhappy moments she never wished to die, and speedily dismissed the thought of her latter end, and comforted herself by thinking instead of all Ted's misdeeds; but somehow, now she was left to herself, there almost seemed excuses to be made for his conduct, bad as it could not fail to be, and, as she told herself over and over again, it certainly was. Poor Helen, left alone with only her proper pride for a solace, found it, now she had no admiring audience, a not altogether satisfactory companion; it needed Agatha and Lily to offer it soothing sops. Mrs. Somerset's proper pride, and Mr. Somerset's hasty temper, that was what the separation really meant; and she gave another sigh as the train slowed down into a big station.

"Five minutes allowed for refreshment," shouted the porters.

How Helen longed for a cup of tea! But she was sure if she once left the carriage she would never find it again, so she gave up the idea. Not so her friend in the next compartment; she saw him get out, evidently on tea intent, and though he never looked her way, she knew, by some magnetic sense, that he had seen her also. Presently he came back; he had had his tea. Oh, the selfishness of man! But if only things had been as they were once, she would have had hers also. Numerous little instances of his care of her now began to obtrude themselves upon her memory; but she kept a stiff upper lip. She was not the woman, so she told herself, to let sentimental memories get the better

of her common sense. What would Agatha say? And she took up a book the said Agatha had given her, a novel of a pronounced type of the new matrimonial departure, in which the heroine was so pure, so sickened at the idea of life with the man she had chosen, that one was tempted to enquire why a person of such intense delicacy of feelings ever wanted to get married at all?

But even "Idina" was laid down after a few moments. Mrs. Somerset's own personality was far more interesting to its owner than the most impassioned utterances of the priestess of her new cult, and she abandoned herself to her own thoughts, till a prolonged whistle broke in upon them. The train was going to enter the great Box Tunnel. Helen had always had a childish dread of tunnels, which she had never entirely outgrown, although, to do her justice, she endeavoured to fight against the feeling, and now resolutely took out her watch, and reminded herself, for she was travelling over well-known ground, how long it always took to go through the Box Tunnel, and how many moments must elapse ere they again emerged into daylight. Then she tried to read again. But somehow the woes of the pure Idina and her sinful husband were not interesting. Helen's own thoughts were still less so, for there are some natures in which mental worry always gives place to physical discomfort, and our poor little heroine was one of these. Every other thought gave way to eager glances at her watch, and many wonderings as to when the tunnel would end.

Hours seemed wrapped up in the moments, and yet only two of these had past. And then? Then there came a shrill scream from the engine echoing through the length of the train; a crash of splintered woodwork and glass, a sudden upheaval of the carriage, a flare of flame flashing past in the thick darkness, then screams of pain and cries for help, as the steam and smoke together became suffocating. There were screams, too, in the carriage where Helen was—some one must be hurt; for one moment she almost thought it must be herself, but was reassured as she felt able to stand up without pain, but what—what—if—if—those in the next compartment had not been so fortunate! At this moment, to add to her horror, the lamp, which had been flickering up and down ever since the accident, gave one sudden flare, and then went out, leaving the carriage in total darkness. To this day

Helen cannot say how she did it, but somehow she got the door open, and groped her way through the thick and sulphury darkness to the next compartment and went in.

There was a light there from a match, which its sole occupant had just struck, when Helen flung herself into his arms. All her proper pride had departed as she clung to her "legalised tyrant," crying:

"Oh, Ted, dear, are you hurt? Take care of me, please, I am so frightened!"

The guard came round presently with his lantern, to say that another train had been sent for to carry the wounded and unwounded to Bath, that there was no more danger, and that, as far as he knew, no one was fatally injured. The man seemed as an angel of light to most of the passengers with his reassuring words.

But one couple he came across seemed perfectly happy and content with the situation—a wrecked train in the middle of the longest tunnel in England might have been an everyday incident to them—and being a man of some experience in certain matters, he merely told them that the train would be up in ten minutes, and shut the door again.

"Oneymoonning, I should say," he muttered. "Lor', it be a strange experience to start wedded life with, for sure!"

But that the guard was not altogether wrong in his conjecture, although he had jumped a little hastily at conclusions, the following letter will show:

"GRAND PUMP HOTEL, BATH,
"September 19th.

"DEAREST LILY,—You were quite right, a honeymoon alone is a 'triste' affair. Will you be surprised after this to hear that Ted and I have made it up—made it up, too, in a tunnel, of all places in the world? You have heard all about the horrid accident we were in—'en't it lucky my boxes were not hurt at all? Well, I can't write much about that, dear, it was perfectly awful; but Ted and I found out somehow we had made a mistake, and that horrid deed is so much waste-paper now; we are having a fresh honeymoon here to celebrate the happy event. I am awfully happy and so is Ted; but Agatha weighs on my mind; I must write to her, I suppose.

"The frocks here are lovely, and quite up-to-date.

"My love and Ted's, and good-bye.

"Affectionately yours,

"HELEN SOMERSET.

"P.S.—I do think Ted is nicer than before.

"P.P.S.—Do break the news to Agatha, there's a darling—I daren't."

When Mr. and Mrs. Somerset again traversed the Box Tunnel some weeks afterwards on their way up to town to take up the old-new life in their Chelsea flat again, it was perhaps pardonable under the circumstances that they edged up to each other's side rather closer than there was any occasion for, and as they emerged into daylight again, the lady made the observation, a totally superfluous one in the opinion of her fellow passengers:

"Do you know I feel quite sorry to say good-bye to the dear old tunnel!"

IN A GARDEN FAIR.

WHEN Nature dons her bridal wreath
Of virgin bloom on pear and plum,
When from the chestnut's opening sheath
Grey buds appear, and underneath
The baby fingers come;

When on the curtain of the air
The elm-tree weaves her brodered green,
When lilacs tall and sweet-briars,
And privet hedgerows everywhere
Shut out the wider scene;

In this enchanted garden ground,
New-born beneath the springtide's breath,
I quite forget the world around,
And almost—what mine eyes have found
In the deep gulfs of death.

THE QUEEN OF IRISH SOCIETY.

I. IN SEARCH OF FAME.

MR ROBERT OWENSON, "the great London actor," was starring at Shrewsbury, that quaint, old-fashioned town, with its timbered gables and noble avenue of lime-trees. Among the public who went to the play was a maiden lady of a certain—or, perhaps, uncertain—age, named Mistress Hill. The great London actor was handsome, accomplished, insinuating—in short, he was an Irishman. By chance he was introduced to the fair Mistress Hill, who, struck by his appearance and conversation, straightway fell in love with him. With a precipitation possibly accelerated by the lady's uncertain age and the fear of friendly interference, the lovers eloped, were married in due form, and lived happily ever afterwards; and their little romance would have been forgotten long ago had they not become the parents of one of the most remarkable women of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Owenson's original patronymic was MacOwen, and he claimed to be descended

from a noble Norman family, a branch of which settled in Connaught during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. However, the fortunes of the family had so far decayed that Robert became sub-agent to an Irish landlord. But the stage proved a more congenial field of labour than the estate. He went up to London, where a distant relative—one Oliver Goldsmith, not altogether unknown to fame—introduced him to Garrick. By Garrick's advice the Irish "Mac" was changed into the Saxon "son," and transferred to the end of the name; so Mr. MacOwen became Mr. Robert Owenson, "the great London actor."

Some time after his marriage, Mr. Owenson determined to take his bride to "the ould counthry." On his way a remarkable, if not wholly unexpected event occurred: while the vessel was ploughing her stormy way from Holyhead to Dublin, Mrs. Owenson was taken ill, and before they reached land presented her husband with a daughter. That daughter, the subject of this sketch, never revealed the secret of her age—in fact, she detested any allusion to it—but it is generally understood that she was born on Christmas Day, 1777. The father, being a most affectionate man, was delighted at the little girl's advent; and she was named Sydney in honour of an Irish Viceroy.

Robert Owenson opened the National Theatre in Dublin. It failed, and he became deputy-manager of the Theatre Royal. Afterwards he visited Castlebar, Sligo, and Athlone, with a company which included his little daughter, then only eleven years of age. At this time she figured on the playbills as "The Infant Prodigy"; and a veritable prodigy she appeared, being very fragile and diminutive for her years, though a most precocious child. When she was eight years old, her sister Olivia was born, to whom she was always deeply attached.

Sydney's first teacher was one of those ragged geniuses which Ireland has so often produced. Her father discovered a stunted, half-starved, shirtless, stockingless youth, besmeared and besmirched, among the properties and paint-pots of the Fishamble Street Theatre. This humble individual, Thomas Dermody by name, had translated Horace, Virgil, and Anacreon, and had written original poems which displayed much humour and learning. Robert Owenson was a kindly soul. He took the young fellow into his own house, made him his daughter's tutor, gave him introductions

to friends, got him a start in life—and so the poor, friendless, ragged youth suddenly became famous. But alas! Dermody had contracted a fatal fondness for that enemy of his race, the bottle. With much learning and not a little talent, he lacked strength of will to resist the temptation that so easily beset him; so he succumbed to its fascination, and soon became a hopeless wreck.

Meantime, Sydney was growing older if not much bigger. Her childhood was spent in the society of actors, amid the jealousies and frivolities of the green-room. Life, however, was not a bed of roses. It was often a hard struggle to keep the wolf from the door. She says herself that her father was frequently torn to prison for debt; her mother many times on the point of beggary with her children. These disagreeable circumstances were borne with a philosophic good-humour racy of the soil, and do not appear to have permanently damped the lively spirits of the family.

When Sydney had reached the age of thirteen she lost her mother, who seems to have been a very worthy woman. The kind-hearted father was extremely fond of his two motherless children, and gave them a great deal of care and attention, taking them out for a country walk twice every day. He determined also to give them the best education his means would allow. Sydney was sent first to a Dublin school, and afterwards to a more fashionable academy, Madame Terson's, of Clontarf House, where, amid more serious subjects, music and other social accomplishments were not neglected.

Upon "finishing" her education the little lady began to show a spirit of independence, and determined to be no longer a burden upon her father. She made her first venture in literature with a small volume of poems, published by subscription, which gave her an entrance into literary society but was not by any means a pecuniary success. Then as now, poetry was a drug in the market. Literature not proving as remunerative as she expected, she became governess in the family of Mrs. Featherstonhaugh of Bracklin Castle, who had a town house in Dominick Street, Dublin. From this house Sydney Owenson, attired in a cook's cloak and bonnet, set out one morning to find a publisher, taking in her hand the manuscript of "St. Clair," tied up with rose-coloured ribbon. In her Autobiography she relates

her adventures with great vivacity. At a bookseller's shop in Henry Street a small boy was sweeping down the steps.

"Is the master in?" queried the lady.

"Which av thim? The young mather or the ould wan?" asked the boy with an impudent stare.

"Here," says Miss Owenson, "a glass door at the back of the shop opened, and a flashy young yeoman in full uniform, his musket on his shoulder, and whistling 'The Irish Volunteers,' marched straight up to me.

"The impudent boy, winking his eye, said:

"Here's a young miss wants to see yez, Mather James."

"Mather James marched up to me, and chucked me under the chin. I could have murdered them both. All that was dignified in girlhood and authorship beat at my heart, when a voice from the parlour behind the shop came to my rescue by exclaiming:

"What are ye doin' there, Jim? Why aren't ye off, sir? for the Phaynix and the Lawyers' corps marched an hour ago."

"An old gentleman, with one side of his face shaved, the other covered with lather, and a towel in his hand, bolted out in a great passion.

"Off wid ye now, sir, like a sky-rocket!"

"Jim went off like a sky-rocket, the boy began to sweep again with great diligence, the old gentleman popped back into the parlour, and presently returned, having completed his toilet.

"Now, honey, what can I do for ye?"

"I hesitated. 'I want to sell a book, please.'

"To sell a book, dear? An ould wan, maybe—for I sell new wans myself."

After some further conversation, Mr. Smith informed her that he did not publish novels; but, moved by her evident distress, recommended her to Mr. Brown of Grafton Street.

Mr. Brown took her manuscript and asked her to call again in a few days. Meanwhile, however, she left Dublin with her mistress, and heard nothing further. A day or two after returning to town, she had occasion to visit a friend. While waiting in the drawing-room she happened to take up a book to pass the time. It was her own novel of "St. Clair!"

Straightway she called upon the publisher, who said he had been unaware of her address. He gave her four copies for

nothing, "which was all the remuneration she got." It was not much; for, though the book was not a great novel, it was almost as good as a text-book on astronomy, history, and metaphysical lore.

Before she ceased to be a governess, she wrote "The Novice of St. Dominic." Francis Crossley, her ardent admirer, copied out the whole six volumes for the press! Many of our modern lady authors would bless their stars if Heaven had sent them such a man. And yet Francis's labour was in vain; his idol did not marry him after all.

II. A LITERARY LIONESSE.

SYDNEY OWENSON went up to London in search of a publisher—in those days a long and perilous journey for an unprotected girl. However, she arrived safely at the "Swan with Two Necks," and found out Sir Richard Phillips, who was pleased with her looks and conversation, accepted her novel, and—best of all—paid her for it at once. She spent the money in a characteristic manner: part of it she immediately remitted to her father; with part of the remainder she bought "an Irish harp and a black mode Cloak."

Sir Richard caused her to reduce the novel to four volumes. It would have been better had it been still further condensed. However, it proved a success, one of its admirers being William Pitt, who is said to have read it more than once during his last illness. Perhaps Pitt was a better politician than a critic; but it must be remembered that Smollett, and Richardson, and Fielding were no more, and that Walter Scott had not yet begun to charm the world with his enchantments.

Whatever may be its merits, the book was favourably received by the public; and Miss Owenson returned to Dublin commissioned by Phillips to write an Irish novel. She spared no labour in collecting materials; took a trip to Connaught to study her subject at first hand; and in 1806 produced her celebrated novel, "The Wild Irish Girl," for which she received three hundred pounds.

She had at first intended to call it "The Princess of Innismore"; but at the suggestion of Dr. Wolcott (Peter Pindar), she changed the title to the one it now bears.

The book was a signal success. It ran through seven editions in two years—a remarkable sale in those days when readers were comparatively few.

According to Mr. Hepworth Dixon, the

story of "The Wild Irish Girl" is founded on a curious incident of the author's own life. Mr. Dixon's account may be thus summarised :

Richard Everard, a young gentleman of good family, fell violently in love with Miss Owenson. The father of the young man discovered the attachment, and was highly displeased. The son had no money, no profession, and no industry. Miss Owenson was also penniless, though she had both talent and energy. The father called upon her, stated his objections, and tried to obtain her promise not to marry his son. She had not the least inclination to marry his son ; but nobody likes to be forbidden to take even a course they are not inclined to. Still she spoke so wisely and conducted herself so pleasantly that the father was deeply smitten by her attractions, and proposed to marry her himself instead of his son ! Miss Owenson wanted to marry neither ; so she politely declined the offer. However, the elder gentleman became the firm friend of her father, and kept up a long correspondence with her, confiding to her all his private affairs, and entreating her to use her influence over his son to turn him from his evil courses.

The history of this curious friendship is detailed in "The Wild Irish Girl." The character of the Princess of Innismore was afterwards identified with Miss Owenson ; and until her marriage she was always known in society by the sobriquet of "Glorvina."

Few people now read "The Wild Irish Girl." The characters are too unreal, sentimental, and didactic for popular taste at the present day. Yet it contains many fine descriptive passages, and a great deal of valuable information about Irish history and Irish antiquities.

After "The Wild Irish Girl," Glorvina published "Patriotic Sketches," which touched upon the vexed questions of the day. Then followed an operetta in which her father appeared. Shortly afterwards the old man finally left the stage, his wants being provided for by his talented and dutiful daughter.

Meantime, her sister Olivia had grown up into a handsome young lady. She occupied a situation as governess, where she fell in with Dr. Arthur Clark, who is described as being "a dwarf in size but a giant in intellect." The doctor, with the courage of a dwarf, proposed to the handsome governess ; she accepted his proposal ; they were married ; the Duke of Richmond,

then Viceroy, knighted him ; and so the beloved Livy became Lady Clark.

Glorvina herself was not without lovers. She was "petite"—very "petite"—and slightly deformed, it is true ; but she was pretty, lively, witty, and altogether charming. She had always been fond of society, even before she was a governess at Nenagh House, when that redoubtable fire-eater, John Toler, Lord Norbury, puffed and blew, and praised her singing in his own comical way. Now that she was a lioness, society received her with open arms, and wooers were not wanting. A mutual attachment sprang up between her and Sir Charles Ormsby ; but this Sir Charles was not the man of destiny ; and so the affair came to nothing.

In 1808 she paid a second visit to London. Her fame had preceded her, and she was welcomed in the highest circles, political, social, and literary. Longmans published her next novel, "Woman ; or Ida of Athens," an inferior work, which the "Quarterly" attacked with a heavy club in its usual savage fashion.

III. COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

AMONG the members of the "haut ton" who had been especially pleased with Miss Owenson's writings were the Marquess and Marchioness of Abercorn. The novels were indeed delightful, but the author was more. Glorvina was charming, she was unique. Glorvina must come to Baronscourt and live with them. Glorvina hesitated. She loved her independence. But the temptation was irresistible ; and the little woman went to Baronscourt to amuse by her wit the stately representatives of the princely house of Hamilton.

They were very kind to her ; took her to London, where she sat to Sir Thomas Lawrence for her portrait, in which she looks exceedingly youthful, though she was then about thirty-three ; got her an invitation to dine with the Princess of Wales ; and appear to have repaid her in their grand fashion for the amusement they derived from her society.

At Baronscourt, under the shadow of the Tyrone mountains, Glorvina wrote "The Missionary," but neither streams nor hills appear to have given her inspiration. "The Missionary" was poor stuff. The Marchioness of Abercorn "yawned over it dimly." The Marquess declared it "the greatest nonsense he had ever heard in his life."

Perhaps Glorvina heard of this candid

criticism. There are always people who take a malicious pleasure in repeating such things with emendations and additions. Glorvina had raised herself in the world by her own exertions; she was a woman of self-reliant spirit. Her dependent position at Baronscourt was neither free from vexations nor altogether to her taste; so one fine day she packed up her trunks and left that noble mansion.

But "The Missionary" proved a failure. The author began to feel that her popularity was waning. She had saved some money; but she was of a charitable disposition, and neither her father's needs nor the other claims upon her charity could be neglected. In these circumstances she thought it prudent to return to Baronscourt, where she was still welcome, and where, perhaps, she had not been so badly treated after all.

At that time the family physician of the Abercorns was a certain Dr. Morgan. He was an English surgeon, a widower, amiable, cultured, talented, and accomplished. Glorvina was then thirty-four, but she had the appearance and manner of a girl. The doctor, who was about the same age, had seen a good deal of life. Somehow or other the sober man of the world fell in love with Glorvina, with her pleasant voice and fine eyes, her harpings and her singing, her pretty airs and graces, her waywardness and her wit. Sometimes she thought she reciprocated his passion; sometimes she was doubtful. They had a long correspondence, which furnishes a great deal of curious reading. The suspected flirtations, the bickerings, the protestations, the petty jealousies, the bursts of devotion, the reproaches, the sarcasms, are very entertaining in their way; but one cannot help thinking occasionally that there is an air of unreality about them, as if they were intended to be read by more than two pairs of eyes. Then the lady had hankerings after a title; the doctor, worthy man, had none. However, this difficulty was overcome; for—probably through the influence of the Abercorns—Dr. Morgan was knighted by the Duke of Richmond. Even then the little woman procrastinated and put off the wedding-day, much to the annoyance of the ardent lover. The Abercorns, who favoured the match, began to grow indignant, and at length the Marchioness took the matter boldly into her own hands.

"One cold morning in January," we are told, "Miss Owenson was sitting by the

library fire in her morning wrapper, when Lady Abercorn suddenly opened the door and said:

"Glorvina, come upstairs directly and be married; there must be no more trifling."

"Her ladyship took Miss Owenson's arm, and led her upstairs to her dressing-room, where the family chaplain was standing in full canonicals with his book open, and Sir Charles Morgan ready to receive her. The ceremony proceeded, and 'the wild Irish girl' was married past redemption."

In this somewhat dramatic fashion Glorvina became Lady Morgan. The happy pair continued to reside at Baronscourt for over a year. Before the end of that year Lady Morgan lost her father, a bereavement which she felt very keenly.

After leaving Baronscourt, the Morgans set up housekeeping in Dublin; and a little later Lady Morgan published "O'Donnel," for which she received five hundred and fifty pounds. "O'Donnel" is generally considered her best novel. Sir Walter Scott spoke highly of it; but Croker attacked it in the "Quarterly" with much vigour and more venom. However, Croker might do his worst; what did it matter? Lady Morgan was about to see the dearest wish of her heart realised; she was beginning to reign as the queen of Dublin society, a princess in her own right and in her own court.

IV. THE REIGN OF THE WILD IRISH GIRL.

FOR many years Sir Charles Morgan's house in Kildare Street was the focus of Dublin fashion. During the season it was crowded with celebrities of all descriptions and from all parts. At one time or another Lady Morgan numbered among her acquaintances nearly everybody of distinction who came to Dublin or London.

Glorvina was a delightful hostess. Society seemed to be her natural sphere. Her features were well-formed, her dark eyes luminous with feeling and intelligence, and her smile was singularly sweet. She played on the harp with taste, and sang the songs of her native land in a clear, sweet voice which in her younger days was much admired. Her manners were charming; her conversation sparkled with wit, humour, and information. Moreover, she was odd, eccentric, original; the frank audacity of her remarks was often very refreshing. She could tell Irish stories so comically that it was impossible for even her high-bred audience to resist a hearty

laugh. In short, she knew the art of pleasing to perfection.

Dress, however, was Glorvina's great "forte." For her, fashion was simply folly. She always dressed in her own fantastic way, whatever might be the prevailing mode. Behold her, then, at one of those Viceregal balls where she often appeared, fluttering about in a white muslin gown and green sash, without feathers or train, sporting a close-cropped wig bound with a fillet of gold! No wonder this odd little woman of fifty-five, with her strange costume and strange ways, created quite a sensation among the fair women and brave men who thronged the Castle ballroom.

Lady Morgan was a staunch Liberal, a constant and consistent lover of her country, though by no means a bigot. With the populace of Dublin she was almost as great a favourite as Dan O'Connell himself. When she went to the theatre, or any other place of amusement, she was welcomed with noisy demonstrations of regard. Some unknown genius made a "pome" about her, which is very racy of the soil:

Och, Dublin sure, there is no doubtin',
Is the greatest city upon the say;
'Tis there you'll hear O'Connell spoutin',
An' Lady Morgan makin' tay.

Beggars and tramps in the streets lifted up their voices and blessed her with Keltic fervour and fluency—as well they might. She records the remarkable benediction received from one old woman to whom she had given sixpence:

"Och, thin! May the Lord bless yer swate honour! An' may ivery hair on yer head be thurned into a mowld candle to light yer sowl to glory!"

In conversation Lady Morgan was most entertaining. Many of her best sallies had reference to subjects of the hour, which have now lost much of their interest; but many others are worth preserving. Her favourite invitation to a married gentleman was: "Be sure you come, and bring the woman that owns you."

Nothing could hit off that tuft-hunting little poet, Thomas Moore, better than this: "Moore looks very old and bald, but still retains his cock-sparrow air."

Of Colburn, her publisher, she said: "He was a man who could not take his tea without a stratagem."

When she was introduced to the learned Mrs. Somerville, she said: "I have long revered you without presuming to understand you."

Describing a party at which she had met a number of celebrities, "There," she said, "was Miss Jane Porter, looking like a shabby canoness; there was Mrs. Somerville in an astronomical cap. I dashed in, in my blue satin and point lace, and showed them how an authoress should dress."

Again she speaks of Miss Porter, then popular as the author of "The Scottish Chiefs": "I met Jane Porter. She told me she was taken for me the other night, and talked to as such by a party of Americans! She is tall, lank and lean, and lackadaisical, dressed in the deepest black, with rather a battered black gauze hat, and an air of a regular Melpomene. I am the reverse of all this, 'et, sans vanité,' the best dressed woman wherever I go. Last night I wore a blue satin trimmed fully with magnificent point lace and stomacher, 'à la Sévigné,' light blue velvet hat and feather, with an aigrette of sapphires and diamonds. 'Voilà!'"

"Voilà," indeed! That odd little woman, four feet high, old enough to be a great-grandmother, parading herself "à la Sévigné," must have been a curious spectacle; and no doubt Jane Porter thought so. Yet it was a harmless sort of vanity after all.

During her reign in Dublin, Lady Morgan was not idle. She and Sir Charles went to France in 1815. On their return she published "France," a book that contained picturesque and lively sketches of that beautiful country. The usual "slashing" article by Croker soon appeared in the "Quarterly." Lady Morgan replied in her novel, "Florence MacCarthy," in which Croker is held up to ridicule under the name of Crawley; but her caricature was not very successful.

In 1820 she issued a work called "Italy," after a tour in that country with her husband. Italian society being then little known by the average Englishman, her frank and fearless descriptions of it caused no small stir. Of course the "Quarterly," "savage and tartarly," fell upon her tooth and nail. It spoke of her "indelicacy, ignorance, vanity, and malignity"; and it declared that "this woman is utterly incorrigible!"

"The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa" was "this woman's" next attempt in literature. Colburn gave her five hundred pounds and a velvet dress for the copyright.

"The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys" appeared in 1827; then followed "The Book of the Boudoir"; and in 1830 a

second work on France was produced by her indefatigable pen.

About this time Irish politics underwent a complete revolution. Catholic Emancipation had been achieved, a reform which both Sir Charles Morgan and his wife had cordially supported. But after Catholic Emancipation was accomplished, society in Dublin began to change. Lady Morgan could not change with it, so she broke up her court in Kildare Street, and removed with her household gods to that great centre of the literary, political, social, and artistic universe, London.

V. THE SINKING STAR.

THE Morgans took a house at Albert Gate, near Hyde Park, where the little queen set up her gay court without delay. It was soon visited by the rank and fashion, as well as the "littérateurs," of the metropolis. But the duties of social life were quite insufficient to absorb the energies of this wonderful little woman. Literary work never lost its attraction until she was laid under the sod. In 1838 she published "The Princess," containing descriptive sketches of life in Brussels. About the same time a paternal Government awarded her a pension of three hundred pounds in recognition of her services to Irish literature. Possibly this only stimulated her to fresh exertions; for in 1839 appeared "Dramatic Sketches from Real Life," and in 1840 the first two volumes of "Woman and Her Master," which—like many another great work—was left to the world unfinished.

But the shadows of sunset were beginning to gather on the lower slopes. In 1848 Sir Charles died. He was a singularly amiable man whom everybody liked. He had been the kindest and most indulgent of husbands; they had lived very happily together for thirty-one years, and his death was a severe blow to his sorrowing widow. Nevertheless, the buoyancy of her spirits could not be subdued. She recovered her natural gaiety. But in 1847 the death of her beloved sister, Olivia, nearly broke her heart. The companions of her youth were all passing into the Silent Land, leaving her the lonely survivor of early glories.

Still she did not give way. The living, breathing, pushing, struggling world was around her, and she was still both in it and of it. She was always young—she detested dates, she said; and she made it a rule in early life never to allow her temper to be ruffled by anything. And, indeed,

the little woman never did grow old. We are all just as old as we think we are; as the great master of the human heart observes: "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."

Accordingly, Lady Morgan went on writing books, visiting her friends, and giving parties and receptions until the end. On Christmas Day, 1858, being then eighty-one, she gave a birthday dinner-party, at which she was as merry as a cricket, telling droll stories, and even singing a comic Irish song, "The Night Before Larry was Stretched," which, she said, "being written by a Church dignitary could be nothing but good words!" A week after this appeared her "Odd Volume," being a passage from the history of her own eventful life.

She was always a busy bee. Her biographer tells us how she spent her time: "After working all the morning from the moment she awoke till two in the afternoon—her dinner-hour—and sending the friend who worked with her, home, completely tired out, Lady Morgan dressed for the day, and seated herself on the small green sofa in the drawing-room, as fresh as a lark, ready to receive visitors, to hear and to tell the newest gossip of the day; and she frequently had a large party in the evening, till she retired at last declaring 'she was dead.'"

However, the end was not far off. The luminous eyes were to grow dark at last, and the noble head to be laid low. On St. Patrick's Day, 1859, she gave a musical morning party to a fashionable gathering, at which she was as gay and festive as ever. But she caught a cold, from which she never rallied; and on the sixteenth of April, 1859, she passed peacefully away from the world she had so long loved and amused.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "The Thirteenth Brydain," "Catherine Maidment's Burden," "Benefit of Clergy," "The Vicar's Aunt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

DR. MEREDITH was feeling aggrieved. His horse had gone dead lame, and his tricycle, with which he tried to supply the place of a second steed, had, he had discovered that morning, a broken tyre on one of the wheels. He had been compelled, with a few private expressions of his feelings, to send it to be mended, and he

was now tramping the length of a country lane on foot. This was by no means a satisfactory arrangement for a doctor whose every moment was filled up, and more than filled up, with claims on his time and attention which overlapped each other, so to speak, from seven o'clock in the morning to any hour of the night. And he may be forgiven for allowing his irritation to appear on his face as he splashed through the mud.

It was April, and the main roads were dry, but lanes overarched with brambles and trees are apt to take their own time to become passable in comfort. This especial lane was known as the "Hollow Holes," and well deserved its designation. It was pretty enough in summer; the few tourists who found their way to that out-of-the-way corner of Devon unanimously pronounced it "charming." It was, they further declared, the very picture of a Devonshire lane.

The dwellers in and near Mary Combe—which was the time-honoured local contraction of Combe Saint Mary—thought otherwise. They regarded it with varying degrees of distaste; the villagers looking upon it as one of their trials, which, being inseparable from the lot of man on this globe, must therefore be endured with passive resistance; the "gentry" spending much angry breath in vituperation of overseers, highways boards, road surveyors, and all and sundry who might be supposed to be responsible for its condition, and for the fact that it was, from one direction, the only approach to the village.

Dr. Meredith had taken his fair share in this said vituperation before now, but at this present moment he was not reasoning about its cause; he was solely occupied in blaming the ill luck which led him through the Hollow Holes on a day when he had the great misfortune to be on foot. It was now nearly one o'clock, and Dr. Meredith had been up and hard at work since half-past seven. He had just ended a six miles' tramp; he was tired, worried, and hungry; this morning he had only had time for a very scrambling and scanty breakfast; he was still a good quarter of an hour from home, and had yet another patient to see before he could hope to reach it. On this state of things the delay caused by the stickiness of the Hollow Holes came like the proverbial last straw. Dr. Meredith gave way to a muttered exclamation as he splashed himself for the second time in extricating himself from a cart-track, and

strode ahead with angry vigour. But with the exclamation his mind made a sort of rebound from this its last irritation, and, as an overworked brain will often do, fell back on its more serious subjects of worry.

He pulled a little pocket-book from his breast-pocket, unfastened it hastily, and ran his eye along the closely-written list of his afternoon's engagements.

"Let me see," he said to himself, in a sort of half whisper which was as anxious and irritated as was his face. "If I get off by two, that ought to do me. Old Fordham promised to have his beast ready by then, and if I make the old hack go, I might get the Woolton and Kingsgrave work through by four. That would let me get the Norton people, old Bury's daughter, and Matthews seen in time to take the Grange and Jennie Ashcroft on my way back, and get home by seven, I think. It must, that's all. For I must be ready for the club by then, and I equally must see all these people to-day. I must be sharp in starting, though, or it'll be a tight fit."

At this instant a quivering old church clock at some little distance began to sound the first of a series of struggling strokes. Its sound floated uncertainly across the soft spring air, and Dr. Meredith broke off in his reflections to count the strokes instinctively. There were two for each quarter.

"A quarter to one," he said to himself hopefully, as the third set quavered out. "That'll do!" But the fourth began as the words were uttered. "One! By all that's good!" he exclaimed, "I shan't get much more than a look at any lunch!"

With the redoubled energy of a man for whom a quarter of an hour more or less is of serious importance, he quickened his pace until it was as fast as any walk, which is not a run, may be.

Three minutes later he had come to the end of the Hollow Holes and into the bright glare of the April sunshine. Immediately in front of him lay a broad, irregular common, with a rough track running across it. On one side of the track was a pond, gleaming in the April sun like a mirror, and round it a brood of ducks was being mercilessly chased by a little group of children in pinafores.

"Here!" shouted Dr. Meredith, "you go home to your dinners, and leave those ducks to get theirs, or I shall come and see your mothers!"

With an alacrity that proved Dr. Meredith to be a power in their eyes, the pina-

fores scattered themselves in the direction of the cottages which lay on the edge of the common.

Dr. Meredith strode on to where the rough track left the common abruptly. Here, as if to mark its increased dignity, it was mended with stones. That is to say, a great heap of them had been cast down upon the worst part of it, and then left for the passer-by to walk over or avoid at his will. He took the circuitous little track which proved that most people preferred the latter course, and entered upon a village street.

It very confidently asserted itself to be a street, and for the dwellers in it doubtless preserved all the characteristics which represented that term to their minds. Resolved into its component parts, it was a fairly broad road, bordered on either side with cottages of various sizes and forms, most of them set back in gardens; gardens so irregular and varying in shape that the edge of the road was by them made to consist of a curving line, meandering from a yew hedge which enclosed a fair-sized garden to a paling which shut in a narrow strip of potato ground, and so on throughout the length of the whole street. Here and there the line was broken by larger houses than the cottages: small farmhouses, with their small yards and "buildings" at their backs, and a few houses evidently belonging to the "bettermost" inhabitants of Mary Combe.

Dr. Meredith walked up the street quickly. It was very empty and silent, the whole population being more or less engaged in using the "dinner hour" to the best advantage. About five hundred yards from the entrance to the street he stopped. On his left was a house standing back in a long yard, and the contents of the yard—heaps of planks, a half-made waggon, and a small cart which had lost a shaft—proclaimed its owner's calling plainly even without the "Thomas Wilson, carpenter," inscribed on a board over the house door. Dr. Meredith opened the yard gate, strode through it, and knocked sharply with his knuckles on the house door. The knock was unanswered. He waited a moment, and then, lifting the latch, he entered.

"Wilson!" he said in a raised voice, "Wilson!"

At the end of the narrow stone passage appeared a man in his shirt-sleeves; a man whose harassed, anxious face lightened considerably as he saw Dr. Meredith. The latter wasted no time on preliminaries.

"Well, my good fellow," he said tersely, "I suppose I can go up? How is the wife, eh?"

The shadow that had lifted itself from the man's countenance fell again heavily.

"I was just putting on my coat to come for you, sir," he said. "She's been very bad all this morning. Yes, sir, go up, if you please."

"I'm sorry for that," was the response, and almost before the words were spoken, Dr. Meredith had turned up a narrow stair which he evidently knew well, and with a word of announcement had opened the door of a room at its head. It was a small, neat room, which gave an impression of containing absolutely nothing but a bed, on which lay a woman's figure propped up with pillows. The window was opposite the door, and through it the full strength of the spring sun fell on Dr. Meredith, and lighted up every detail of his face and person. His figure was tall and broad; there was a certain "well set up" air about his bearing that gave an impression of quick, alert movements, and at the same time betokened in him the possession of considerable dignity and self-respect. It would be difficult, evidently, to presume upon Dr. Meredith's good opinion; and he would be a bold man who thought of attempting it. But if any stranger had, from this, reasoned that Dr. Meredith was stiff or ungenial, the impression would have been quickly dissipated by his face. It was a very pleasant face, not only in feature, though persons who described Dr. Meredith as "good-looking" were neither wanting nor in error when they did so. Its expression was at once keen, sympathetic, and strong. And the three characteristics seemed to find scope to display themselves everywhere—in his firm mouth, which was not concealed by the very small moustache he wore; in his square forehead, and his keen eyes, in which last they were all accentuated and deepened by a touch of quick humour. It was a face that deserved trust quite as much as respect; and in the eight months that had elapsed since he came to Mary Combe its inhabitants had learned to give Dr. Meredith both.

He stepped quietly up to the bed, and as he did so every trace of the irritation and worry that had possessed him in his walk disappeared as completely as if they had never been. A voice, face, and manner that were wholly kindly and sympathetic greeted the woman before him. He might

have had an hour to spare instead of being pressed for every moment.

She was a young woman of about twenty-three; evidently in the last stages of decline, and as evidently unaware of the fact, but possessed wholly by that pathetic incontrovertible hopefulness which is one of the inevitable signs of the end.

"Wilson's been worrying me to let him go for you all the morning, sir," she began. "My cough's been rather bad, and I thought I'd keep up here; but I seem better in myself. It's just the wind's turned colder, I make no doubt."

"No doubt, Mrs. Wilson!" was the cheery answer. "And now, let's see what it has done to you."

Ten minutes later, Dr. Meredith descended the narrow stairs again, to find Wilson waiting for him below.

"What do you think of her, sir?" was his anxious question.

"I think she's low this morning, my man, certainly," Dr. Meredith said. "But keep your spirits up, and hers, too. I'll change her medicine if you'll send one of your boys up at once for it. And I'll look in again this evening some time."

Without waiting for Wilson's thanks, Dr. Meredith strode on up the street; and as he walked the worried expression reasserted itself like a returning cloud.

"Mrs. Wilson!" he murmured. "Where on earth can I get her in this evening? I will, though! That's certain. Now for some lunch. I shall do it yet by two."

He stopped as he spoke at a house standing further back from the street than any he had yet passed. It was surrounded by a brick wall, a gate in which he opened and walked through a fair-sized garden to the front door. It stood ajar, he pushed it open hastily, entered, and opened a door on his right hand. This he let fall together again with a sound of irritation.

"Mrs. French!" he called, loudly. "Mrs. French! I'm waiting, please, and in a great hurry!"

With these words he went back into the room into which he had glanced and sat down at the end of a table, where a tray covered with a white cloth, and bearing the modest burden of one single silver fork, seemed to indicate a dim future prospect of luncheon.

"I do believe no woman knows what punctuality means!" he ejaculated angrily. "When I told her, too, the last thing, that I should be hurried!"

His further soliloquy was broken in upon by a complicated sound, something like a machine getting into working order; a combination of a heavy, irregular footfall, a clinking of spoons and glass, and the rattling of a dish-cover on a dish too large for it; the whole combined with a quick series of breathless gasps. This combination gave Dr. Meredith some satisfaction, for his face decidedly lightened as the door was opened by a foot, and the working power of the combination, a figure bearing a tray, entered.

"It's very late, Mrs. French," he said sternly, as the figure, which was that of a portly woman of fifty-five or so, proceeded to add the items on her tray to the forlorn silver fork. "I said a quarter-past one, and it's more like half-past, now."

"I know you did, sir, and that's the truth; but I've been that harassed and put about this morning, sir, with sending after you, that I've got a bit behind, in consequence."

The last two words were Mrs. French's great weapons in the battle of life. She considered that, pronounced with due and slow emphasis, they, in themselves, constituted a perfectly unanswerable climax to any argument; and she therefore wielded them in season and out of season, with a serene unconsciousness of their futility.

Dr. Meredith, while she spoke, was arranging the dish and plate she brought with his own hands, for the promotion of more haste. He stopped short, however, as she ended, and turned sharply round:

"Sending after me!" he said hastily. "what for, Mrs. French? Who have you sent after me?"

"Lor, you never mean to say you've not met Bill Strong, sir! And I sent him a quarter after twelve, I having told him you were to the best of my knowledge gone to Knott's Green up the Hollow Holes; he said he'd go, in consequence."

"Who wanted me? What did he come for?"

Mrs. French was standing with the dish-cover in her hand all this time, and the only way in which she seemed able to meet this terse question was by a gesture that included this useful article.

"Why, sir, he brought a note for you to go to Mr. Marlitt's lodge, sir. Saunders, the gamekeeper, has had an accident, Bill says—serious, it's like to be, from what I could judge."

"Never mind what it's likely to be! When did he arrive?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir; that I couldn't say. But that ain't all, sir; while he was talkin' to me a man came from Stoke Vere Rectory; he brought a message, would you go as soon as you could, the Reverend Swinton has hurt his wrist or somethin' o' that. And I gave Bill that message, too, as he was goin', and sent the man back home along."

"Anything else?" Dr. Meredith spoke with a grim terseness which was quite lost on Mrs. French. She was wont to describe her master as a "short, quick gentleman," and this, to her, embraced every phase of feeling on Dr. Meredith's part.

"No, sir," she answered; "nothing of no importance. Only Mary Brown's grandchild drank a lot of the old man's cough stuff by mistake, and she sent here after you. But Alfred Johnson's gone along to her, sir."

"Then Mary Brown's grandchild is settled for ever by this time!" muttered Dr. Meredith under his breath. At the same moment he rose from his scarcely-tasted lunch and pushed his chair away. "Fordham's horse will be here for me directly," he said. "When they bring it, tell them to saddle it at once, please."

He seized his hat and went hurriedly out of the front door, and down the village street in the direction of the dwelling of the aforesaid Mary Brown at a pace which, if they had not been accustomed to seeing him always in a hurry, would have startled the phlegmatic male population of Mary Combe, which was just setting out for its afternoon's work.

Alfred Johnson was a boy of eighteen, of "superior" parentage in Mary Combe, who had been taken on, at his own earnest request, by Dr. Meredith, to "learn something of dispensing, in order to try for a dispenser's situation later on." Believing the boy to be fairly intelligent, Dr. Meredith had sanguinely hoped that some slight lessening of labour to himself might be the result. He had long realised how much too sanguine he had been, and he had further laid strict orders on the youth in question never to meddle with anything or anybody, on his own account.

A quarter of an hour later he returned, mounted his waiting horse, and set off twenty minutes late on the round that had already been so full of pressing appointments that it could hold no more, with two more to be squeezed in, and Mrs. Wilson to be seen on his way home.

He left the village by the opposite direc-

tion from that of the Hollow Holes, and the horse was soon answering to his hand along a good high-road, that gleamed white and dusty in the afternoon sun.

"Goodness only knows how this is to be done!" he said wearily to himself, as he tried for the third time to rearrange the work before him, so as to make it take in the two extra appointments. "It must be, that's all I know! But I can't do it by myself much longer, and that's all about it. The practice is far beyond one man's power. And there's more work to be had if I could only get through it." He broke off with a short laugh, which echoed rather sarcastically in the afternoon air. "What's the use of talking about 'can't,' though?" he added grimly; "it's no good thinking of help, for it simply won't run to it. No, my boy, you must hammer along by yourself. I'd better go to the Marlitts' first and that'll be done," he said, checking his horse, and turning it sharply into a side lane that led off the high-road.

It was nearly six o'clock when Dr. Meredith and the horse, both with an air of weariness about them, found themselves at the entrance of a village about three miles from Mary Combe, Stoke Vere by name. It was arranged on much the same promiscuous sort of principle as the former, its houses straggled up much the same sort of long flowery street, which culminated, as it were, in the church.

By its side, almost under its shadow, stood the Rectory, a new, smartly-built house that harmonised oddly indeed with the sedate grey beauty of the little old church.

Dr. Meredith rode up the street and turned in at the Rectory gate. It led him into a drive which ran through a garden bright and trim with April flowers.

"What can the old fellow have done to himself?" mused Dr. Meredith as he walked his horse between the scented flower-beds. "Some of his archaeological gymnastics are at the bottom of it, probably!"

He reached the front door and dismounted. With the reins in his hand he was just looking about for something to tie them to while he rang the bell, when he was startled by the sound of a voice at his elbow.

"Dr. Meredith!" it said. "I'm glad you've come."

He turned quickly. Beside him stood a girl of nineteen, dressed in a blue serge

frock. This was by no means so ingenuous an attire as might be imagined. Miss Rose Swinton took care to have all her "things" made according to the very newest lights she knew of, and there were all of these in the elaborations of her blue gown. She knew herself to be a pretty girl, and she had long ago ordained that her prettiness should be set off to the best possible advantage. A great deal of red-brown hair, a pair of large, wide-open blue eyes, and a pretty mouth, made up a very attractive whole. The beautiful hair was "done up" in the newest and most elaborate fashion, to correspond with her gown; and the hand she held out to Dr. Meredith was poised at an angle carefully studied from what she had learned, in a recent visit to London, as to the habits of "smart people." One of the ambitions of Rose Swinton's life was to be considered "smart."

Her days were at her own disposal, for she was the mistress of the Rectory. Mrs. Swinton had died at Rose's birth, and the only other daughter had long been married. Most of her father's spare time was absorbed in the archæological pursuits which were his one mania; therefore, save for the very slight amount of parish work she did to please her father, she was free to cultivate "smartness" to her heart's content, and to gather about her to that end all the younger members of the neighbouring clerical families who chanced to sympathise with her longings.

"I began to think that you had not got my message," she continued.

"I did not get it so soon as you intended," he answered. "But I am sorry I could not have got here earlier in any case. I hope——"

Rose Swinton interrupted him.

"Come in," she cried, "and I'll send Joseph to your horse. Father is in his study. We've not seen a single soul all day; he and I have been absolutely alone together—a dull fate for the poor dear thing, even before this happened."

She was preceding him along a passage as she spoke, and breaking off, she turned and threw a glance over her shoulder, a glance that seemed to invite him to contradict her, and she gave a smile which showed a lovely row of even white teeth.

Dr. Meredith, apparently, did not see the glance. He made no response, but seemed to arouse himself from a sort of abstraction, as he said quickly:

"How did your father meet with this accident, Miss Swinton?"

"You know what he is," was the answer, given with a light and very pretty laugh. "He was up a ladder, deciphering some inscription or other in the church; it slipped, and he fell. Fortunately it was a very short one. But how he got off with nothing but a hurt wrist, I can't conceive. Here we are," she added, stopping before a door. "Go in, will you, Dr. Meredith, and I'll go and see about some tea for you."

Paying not the slightest attention to Dr. Meredith's emphatic statement as to the haste he was in to get back, Rose Swinton walked rapidly across the passage towards the drawing-room and rang the bell for tea. She was accustomed to disregard people's assertions if they chanced to differ with her own point of view.

There was a smile on her pretty face which very thinly covered considerable irritation, when Dr. Meredith emerged from Mr. Swinton's study, followed by his patient, and prepared then and there to take his leave of Rose, who stood waiting in the doorway opposite to welcome him to tea.

"No, thank you, Miss Rose," he said, "Indeed, it's absolutely out of the question. I'm glad to tell you that your father's wrist is not put out. It is only a very severe wrench and bruise. But, my dear sir," he added, turning to Mr. Swinton, "it is a perfect miracle that it is no worse. You really should forswear ladders."

Mr. Swinton, a quiet, meek-looking man of about sixty, assented patiently to this remark. Mr. Swinton's way of meeting life had been to assent patiently to all it brought him, including his daughter.

And he found it both well and necessary to pursue this quiet course of action for some moments after Dr. Meredith had said a final good-bye. The latter, meanwhile, was urging the weary energies of "Fordham's beast," to the utmost limit compatible with consideration for them. And, by dint of so doing, he contrived to reach Mary Combe and his own house by five minutes to seven, leaving himself thereby just time to dismount and take his way to his small consulting-room, in time for a group of "club patients," who expected him on two nights a week to be ready and desirous to listen to their account of whatever ills they might be enduring, and to assuage them, then and there, for ever.

This process was over at half-past eight,

and then Dr. Meredith went out to give Mrs. Wilson that second "look in" which he had promised. This done, he sat down at length to a meal, which was nominally dinner, but which, by reason of its long delayed and much over-cooked condition, presented scarcely enough sustenance to be called by that name. He gave up the effort to get through Mrs. French's frizzled cookery, and fell back on bread and cheese, glancing at intervals as he ate towards a door at the end of the room, with an expression of weariness that seemed to say that his thoughts were occupied with some further duty that remained to be done on the other side of that door. Such, in truth, was the fact. The door communicated with the rooms that he used as surgery and consulting-room, and no sooner had he ended his meal, than he rose and took his way through it into the surgery to do some dispensing, and to undo whatever confusion Alfred Johnson's efforts might have prepared for him in the course of the afternoon.

Mrs. French and the girl who helped her "do for" Dr. Meredith, came in and cleared away the remains of his meal, and then Mrs. French, whose experience of life had induced in her a great respect for what she called her "proper rest," took herself and the girl to enter upon it, leaving the house quiet and still. The only sound in the sitting-room was the crackling of the small fire, pleasant enough in the chill of the spring night, when flames flickered cheerfully on every detail. It was a square room, with ugly old-fashioned fittings; a heavy oak dado and cornice, both painted a mustard-coloured yellow; and a red flock paper.

The house itself was old. It was one of those curious old houses which are to be found, in some parts of England, in almost every village; the former dwellings of that race of small landed gentry that has so

nearly passed away. It had been standing empty for a long time; in consequence of that, and various structural defects, Dr. Meredith had obtained it at a low rent.

But none of its rather ugly fittings could make the room seem other than comfortable. Dr. Meredith's possessions: his neat writing-table, his book-cases, his easy chair, and one or two good pictures, gave it an air of life that was pleasant enough.

It was striking eleven by the same old quavering church clock, whose quarters he had counted in the Hollow Holes at one o'clock, when Dr. Meredith re-entered his sitting-room. His face was white with actual weariness, and his brow was drawn into a sharp frown from fatigue. He let the door fall together behind him, and walked slowly towards the table in the middle of the room, dragged out a chair from it with a weary awkwardness and let himself fall into it heavily. He sat there silently, resting his two elbows on the table, and supporting his chin in his hands for several minutes.

"It's more than one man can do, with the best will in the world!" he said at length, with a sort of hopeless groan. "And what on earth am I to do, I should like to know? I can't coin the screw to pay an assistant. I wish I could, that's all!"

He stared steadily at the red flock paper as if vaguely hoping that an answer of some sort might evoke itself from the very walls. At last he rose languidly, and taking the lamp, placed it on his writing-table.

"I'll write before I get quite too fagged," he said, as he took some note-paper out of a drawer and sat down. "And I'll tell her; one must have a groan sometimes."

He drew the paper into position and began to date his letter; after the date he wrote:

"My dearest Althea."

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII. FREE FOR A TIME.

"COME into the glen," she said. "The evening is warm, we shall be undisturbed there."

The two walked on a little way in silence. The Rothery tumbled and roared beside them deep down in its rocky bed, and the trees above only answered by silence. There seemed a hush everywhere except close by the rushing torrent. Penelope was suddenly conscious that she was filled with happiness, that all nature spoke in soft words, and that she must make the most of this moment of joy. Forster's very presence was happiness for her, and she knew it. He seemed to be thinking to himself as he walked by her side, and it was not till they had reached the end of the glen, and were once more out of sound of the roaring torrent that he spoke. Penelope was not impatient. She was only anxious to prolong the time; she was happy in his presence, and his silence was sweet balm to her troubled spirit.

"I ought not to be keeping you," he said at last, "but now that all is ready for our departure, I have a fear——"

"What is it?" she laughed softly.

"That I am doing you a great wrong by taking Philip away. In the old days my mother used to warn me that I was too masterful, and that I made him do all I wished. She spoke half in fun, but there was truth in it, I know. Now it seems that the old power is not gone. I thought that though his affection is

strong, his marriage must break the chain."

"Marriage does not destroy love," said Penelope, not knowing what else to say.

"No, of course not, but Philip is giving up a great deal for me—for our work, at least."

"He does not find enough to do here."

"But he should have thought of that sooner. He—am I using my right of friendship too freely?"

"No, no—say what you like."

"He may have higher duties than those he is going to undertake."

"I should never keep any one back from duty," said Penelope in a low voice, feeling that she was sinking very low in her own estimation.

"He hardly realises your generosity and your nobility," said Forster, suddenly thinking how much he had misunderstood this woman, and that, had he won her, he would have won a perfect woman. Was it possible that Philip was unworthy of her and incapable of realising all she was? Sympathy is a dangerous gift when offered to a married woman, but Forster was blinded by the impulse of the moment. He took Penelope's hand which was resting on the stile. "You are a very noble and a very generous woman. You may be sure that the thought of you will help me much in my work. If life had been other than it is, if fate had chosen another path for us both—but as it is, you must remember that I shall try to remind Philip that he has other duties than to me."

Forster had once fancied himself in love with this woman. He had dreamed a dream, which placed her in a position where she could forward his ideals, but strange to say, it was only at this moment

that love in its most insidious form suddenly shot his arrow to the mark. All who needed protection appealed powerfully to Forster, and only at this moment did Penelope appeal to him in this way. Philip was his friend; but Philip had lightly wooed, and too lightly won, a priceless treasure. He saw it all clearly. Philip had been in love with an ideal woman, and had misunderstood the noblest reality. Now he was lightly seeking for more exciting work, because the quiet, dull life in this lonely dale was not to his taste. This Princess, so nobly born, so truly descended—not from royal blood, but from the blood of heroes—could suffer without complaint. Forster had thought himself safe. His friend's wife could have nothing to do with him, could not appeal to his heart; and now suddenly in this lonely glen, here on the wild hillside, he found out that no one can be safe from the snare of the cunning little god who is mocked at by many, but who can make himself feared by any of whom he vouchsafes to take notice. "Philip is unworthy of her," he said to himself. "He leaves this priceless treasure as one leaves a toy of which one is wearied."

"Mrs. Winskell, will you tell me, have you well considered your lonely position here? Ought Philip to—to—"

"Hush," said Penelope softly, in a voice Forster had never heard before, "hush; what is settled is best. Besides, I shall know you are the better for Philip's presence."

"What does that signify?"

"You are Philip's friend," she said almost under her breath. "Come back now."

He turned slowly, and the two walked down the glen path.

All the schemes that Forster had cherished seemed suddenly as nothing compared with this woman's happiness. He never did anything by halves, his character was too enthusiastic for that, and the very nature that had enabled him to do great things was now the cause of his danger. The very silence that seemed to fall on them was dangerous; or was it that Penelope's hidden love was communicated by some invisible power which rules us more than we can understand?

Before they reached the end of the glen, Forster paused.

"This may be the last time we meet," he said, feeling that, because it was the last time, he might say things which other-

wise it would have been impossible to say. "You know that once, for one short hour, I hoped you would have lived my life. I may say it as a dying man may say some things, otherwise unspeakable. I think that love is like leaven, it spreads silently. God orders our lives, and some very beautiful and precious gifts for which we may long are given, not to us, but to our neighbours, our friends. Still, some day you may want help, which I alone can give you, and if so—if so, will you accept it, without any doubt or any misgiving?"

He took her hand and felt it trembling.

"Am I displeasing you?" he said very humbly.

"No, oh no."

"Well, if that time ever comes, if I can do anything for you, will you ask me? The ideal world has its own regions, and in some natures the ideal triumphs over the real. I am going to work for my fellow-creatures, but apart from that life, there will be a kingdom where an ideal woman will reign. It is very, very beautiful to know that you will think of the work, and of the workers."

Penelope's heart was beating fast. How could she have prepared herself against this? How could she have foreseen that Forster would lose his ordinary calmness? She wanted to tell him that she had never loved any but him, that for his sake Philip was nothing to her, and that pride and poverty had driven her into this false situation. How could she tell him this? No, she could not; besides, it would destroy his ideal of her. She did not know how it was, but she saw that he endowed her with virtues which were not hers, that her sin had fallen on Philip's shoulders, and that he was thus forced to accept a position in which her pride and her uncle's will had placed him.

But this was for the last time, she also thought—which words have spread a carpet of gossamer over many a precipice.

"If ever I want your help, I will ask you. I would rather ask you than any one else. Take Philip with you and let him help you."

They paused one moment, the one moment when on both sides there was only a thought of what life's ideal happiness might have been.

"You are a very noble woman. A true Princess, such as even a republican like myself can admire. Remember your promise."

"I will," she answered, but for the first

time in her life she was not proud. She would have changed her title of honour at this moment if—if Forster could have taken Philip's place and Philip's right over her.

"Good-bye ; I shall not see you to-morrow," he said, trying to shake off a feeling of sadness which he could not resist, for till this evening he had seen his future only in a golden haze, and now all the hereafter seemed full of uncertainty. "At times, very seldom I am glad to say, there comes a feeling that I have undertaken a profitless labour, and that the people themselves will reproach me for trying to change them."

"No, no, that is not possible," said Penelope, raising her head and looking at him for one moment full of earnest enthusiasm.

"You are right, it is not possible. For one moment I felt a coward. Good-bye once more."

Forster left her suddenly, and Penelope walked slowly homewards. Her uncle met her at the door.

"So you will remain with the old people, child," he said, with a half-laughing, half-serious expression.

"Of course, I shall never leave my post, uncle. You and I have been too long at the helm to give it up willingly."

"I have been promising no end of things to Philip ; but as I told him, the Palace is not as exciting as colonial farming."

"He is right, quite right to go. He will be of immense service to Mr. Forster."

The next morning Penelope heaved a sigh of relief. "I am free," she said, "free for a little time."

CHAPTER XXIX. A YOUNG LIFE.

THE winter had been very severe, heavy falls of snow had covered the mountains and glens in the dale country, and seclusion was not only a name but a reality for the inhabitants of the Palace. Spring had come there very slowly, and summer had delayed her arrival. But at the home of the Bethunes spring was a delight and a joy. They understood how to make themselves happy in the country, and frequent visitors kept them from becoming too much absorbed in their own pursuits.

Mr. Bethune was a true recluse. He shut himself up in his study with his first editions, and vegetated to his heart's content. Dora alone could entice him away

from his books, now that she was a come-out young lady. These were her reasons for leaving the school-room.

"Now that Forster is away, mother really cannot do without me," she said decidedly. "Adela has given herself body and soul to teaching the village lads to carve, and Mary is composing an oratorio. I wonder for what past family sins one of us is made musical, and the others have a craze for doing good ! It's no use my taking to good works ; I have to be a walking dictionary. Mother never remembers the day when the mails go to Africa, unless I remind her. Then I have to write to Forster every week. I must leave the school-room."

Mrs. Bethune was sure Dora knew best, so Mademoiselle disappeared in tears, and Dora came out, not in the ordinary significance of the word, for she went to no balls nor parties, but was simply more at the beck and call of the whole household. Parties were reserved for the London season ; whilst in the country the Bethunes led a quiet life, varied by occasional visitors in the house.

When leafy June arrived there was a sudden cessation of letters from Forster. Dora declared that her brother's epistles were very uninteresting, he spoke of nothing but the land ; but Mrs. Bethune reproved her for saying that Forster could do anything wrong. He was the greatest hero the modern world could show. If only he would make haste and come back !

"I do wish he had not taken up the agricultural idea," said Dora. "Father thinks it all right, and so do you and Adela, but—but——"

"My dear, when you have such a brother you should not criticise him. There is no one at all like dear Forster."

"But, mother, there is Mr. Gillbanks-Winskell. Why did he change his name ? He is doing just the same thing, and yet no one calls him a hero."

"Of course not, Dora ; you see he only followed Forster. Your dear brother led the way. It is a great thing to be a pioneer."

"That is the word people use now. I suppose it means coming first somewhere. Forster was always first at everything good and clever. I am very anxious about his not writing. Mr. Winskell might have sent us a line."

"Mother, it does seem odd, doesn't it, that he left his wife just to follow Forster ? Adela says it is Forster's influence which

made the Princess sacrifice herself, and let her husband go to Africa."

"Yes, dear, I am sure Adela is right. I hope when Forster comes home he will try and help the lower orders in some less painful manner. Poor dear boy, I can't bear to think of him in that Dark Continent."

"It doesn't seem so very dark, and I believe they are all enjoying themselves very much. They have no parties or dates to remember."

"He will come back so tanned," said Mrs. Bethune sadly, "and his complexion was so healthy. Well, I do hope those poor dear people will make haste and learn all they can learn from Forster and release him."

"But, mother, that isn't the point. Somehow I think this experiment has been a failure."

"Oh, no, Forster never fails, dear. What can make you think this?"

"I don't know, but he used to have all his heart in it, and now it isn't there, I am sure it isn't. He writes rather like a blue book. He never mentions Phillip as he did formerly. Altogether——"

"Really, Dora, you think too much. Your brother has always been right, ever since he was a baby in arms. He always was so good. He never cried as you did."

"Well, there's Mrs. Goodman to be visited to-day. She is ill, and Jim Goodman has asked me to step down to see his mother. He always says 'step down,' as if we lived on pedestals."

"He understands the difference of rank, you see. Of course it doesn't really matter, but——"

"Forster's ghost will come if you use the word rank. I'll leave you to deal with it, mother. By the way, all the Hartleys are coming to-morrow. Last time they came we all forgot it, and nothing was ready for them."

"Yes, it really was dreadful! You were in the school-room. I'm sure, Dora, you are a great comfort to me. You are the only one of my children born with a memory."

Dora Bethune was soon on the way to the village. The Castle, so called from its ancient ruins, part of which had been repaired and transformed into a modern building, was, in truth, the centre of the village community. Every cottager knew that in case of need, help could be obtained there. If a cow or a pig died, Mrs. Bethune was sure to head a subscription for another of the same kind, unless Mr.

Forster were at home, in which case the cottager knew better than to ask for public sympathy. Mr. Bethune could also be easily worked upon about repairs, and Miss Adela was for ever providing outfits for first places. These good people often erred against the laws of political economy, but they had the reward of popularity, and the pleasure of hearing others disparaged in their favour, against which insidious flattery few can be quite proof.

Dora reached Mrs. Goodman's cottage, wondering what she could say to sympathise with the poor woman, whose husband had been buried the previous week.

"I never have lost a husband," thought Dora, "so I cannot imagine what it feels like. I wish the Princess were here; she has been parted all these months from hers, so she could explain. I wish he and Forster had never gone. Somehow or other I feel sure something is the matter with him; I am sure of it."

She knocked at the cottage door and was bidden to come in. The old lady was sitting in her arm-chair, with her hands folded listlessly on her lap. Her spectacles were by her side, laid on an open Bible.

"Ah, Miss Dora, it's you, is it? My son said he would ask you to look in. And how's Lady Bethune? I'm sure she's grieving for her son. There's nothing but sorrow in the world, Miss Dora."

Dora was not at all of that opinion. She was full of life and hope for the future.

"Mother does want her son back, of course, but she knows he is making himself useful, and then she likes getting his letters. She told me to ask if there was anything you wanted, Mrs. Goodman."

"You'll give my duty to her, Miss Dora, but there's little that I want. My poor man being dead and buried has put me about dreadful. I don't seem to know where I am, my dear."

"Of course," said Dora, thinking that "put her about" was a strange way of expressing sorrow for a husband's death; but after all it was the truth.

"But I would not have it otherwise, my dear. He was a good man to me when he wasn't in drink, and Jim is a steady lad, thank Heaven."

Dora talked on for some time, but she was thinking of what Forster had often said, that until the mind is raised above sordid care, it cannot appreciate the higher beauty of life.

As she came out of the cottage she found herself face to face with a gentleman. Both

stopped, but it was the stranger who spoke first.

"Excuse me, but I think I am speaking to one of the Miss Bethunes."

"Yes, and I have seen you before," said Dora, smiling, "but where? At—at—now I know. You are Mr. De Lucy. I am going home, will you come with me?"

"I was making my way to the Castle. I am the bearer of a message from your brother."

"From Forster!" Then with a sudden rush of colour, which made her look very pretty, she added: "Is there anything the matter? If so, tell me first; it would kill mother if——"

Dora looked up into the young man's face, but read in it nothing alarming. She noticed once more how handsome he was, and how quiet and composed was his manner.

"Don't be frightened. He has been ill, but he is on the high-road to recovery—and is coming home in the next ship. I was sent to Africa for my health, and I happened to come across the Rookwood settlement. We met almost as old friends."

"Tell me about him. Is Mr. Winakell coming back with him? How glad the Princess will be! You remember her, Mr. De Lucy?"

"Perfectly; one cannot easily forget her; but I believe Mr. Winakell is not coming, indeed it was impossible for both leaders to leave at the same moment. His influence there has been marvellous, especially since Mr. Bethune has been laid up with that low fever."

"Why did he not tell us? Please make light of it to my mother."

"Most likely he will be almost well by the time he reaches home. That is really all the bad news I bring. The settlement is quite a success, but I thought your brother seemed less contented with his ideas than formerly."

"Oh, that is impossible; Forster is so true, so steadfast."

"You know we do not agree about the lower orders. I look upon his enterprise as wasted labour. We had long discussions about it. He is living like a cottager, and the hut which he calls his house would surprise you."

"He believes in his principles, you know. Forster is a real philanthropist, not a make-believe."

"It will all break down—oil and water will not mix."

"But where is your sister?"

"She is staying in London with some relations. She was much interested in hearing about Mr. Bethune's settlement. Your brother actually managed to fire her young mind with his ideas."

Mr. De Lucy laughed a little scornfully.

"Have you been writing a book on your travels?" asked Dora, a little irritated with the stranger for not admiring Forster.

"I took notes certainly, but I shall take care not to publish them. These hasty travellers' tales are really too common."

"You want to find perfection," said Dora, "so I suppose you will spend your life in looking for it." With her quick, keen insight Dora often hit the nail on the head. Mr. De Lucy winced mentally.

"It will, at all events, hurt no one but myself. I shall not have led any one astray."

"I think it is better to lead people astray from good motives than not to lead at all," she said.

"Better to lose two lives than one, you think?"

Arthur De Lucy looked at the girl with a half-smile of contempt. She had developed so much since he had seen her abroad, that she seemed almost to be another person. She had stepped suddenly over the borderland between childhood and youth.

"We don't know what using oneself for others means, I expect. For instance, Forster never could lead others astray."

"You have great faith in your brother, but infallibility is a dangerous doctrine. I have never found it satisfactory."

"I am sorry for you," said Dora, laughing. "You do not know the joy of trusting any one perfectly."

"Nor the disappointment of it. I have no faith left in humanity. Society is hollow, and if it takes up good works it is purely to follow a fashion."

"What horrid ideas!" said Dora, getting angry, and wishing Mr. De Lucy had never come, but hospitality made her hide her feelings, especially as they had just reached the Castle. The front door opened into a spacious and somewhat gloomy hall, full of relics of past Bethunes. The floor was inlaid with mosaics, representing Neptune, Venus, Dolphins, and Centaurs, copied from a Roman pavement. A former Bethune had been artistic in a wrong manner, wishing to bring Italy near his Castle, and not seeing that each country should have its own artistic centre and its own fashion.

The hall door stood open, and Dora led the way through a small drawing-room into a larger chamber looking out upon green lawns and cedar-trees, and all that could delight the eyes and the imagination.

"Your brother left a very beautiful home for his hut," remarked Arthur De Lucy, still in his sceptical voice, "so we must conclude that the hut has hidden charms."

"Then you do not believe in disinterested devotion?"

"No, at least I have never seen it."

"But your sister——?"

"Ida! she is a child in mind, and besides, she finds me a convenient courier. If it were not for me she would lead a dull, narrow life with her aunt; as it is I take her abroad often, and her affection for me is very interested. I don't mean that she would say so, but then, where is the man or woman who is perfectly honest?"

"I can't bear to hear you say that. Now I will find mother. You won't mind waiting a moment; I must prepare her for your arrival. My sister Adela is in the village. She has a class of boys on half-holidays. Father is out, I fear."

"Do not hurry, Miss Bethune. I can admire your cedar-trees from here."

When she was gone Arthur De Lucy walked slowly round the large drawing-room, examining pictures and making mental notes.

"The family is so sure of its own birth and its own position, that the son can afford to be peculiar. It will not last long. I saw signs of weariness in his enthusiasm. This time he has carried it too far. That friend is the true hero in my estimation; but what an odd thing to leave his wife so soon! It was a case of marrying for money, I suppose. He bosses the show without putting himself forward. I should say that the noble scion of the Bethunes rather unnecessarily snubbed his friend. Well, it is a shame to destroy this girl's faith. By the way, if I were not sure of the contrary, I should say that she was genuine, but, like Ida, she is too young to have a choice. She has more character and backbone than my little sister. However, she is a girl who invites contradiction, and that is 'the mark of the beast' in the feebler sex, I fear."

There were sounds of footsteps, and Mrs. Bethune tumbled rather than walked into the room. She held out both her plump hands to Arthur, and her face was full of smiles.

"You are indeed welcome. A friend of dear Forster. I do call it kind of you to have come to us in order to give us news of him."

"My news is scanty, I fear," said Arthur, in the quiet, gentlemanly manner which at first attracted others to him. "Mr. Bethune has been ill with an attack of fever, and his friend and the doctor decided that he must return home as soon as he could travel to Cape Town."

"But it's not serious! He is better! Oh, poor dear Forster, I knew some day he would kill himself for others. I know it's quite right theoretically, I mean, but when—when it comes to this——"

"You feel, as I do, that it is nonsense."

"Oh no, mother, you don't," said Dora, hurrying to the rescue. "You said Forster was quite right, so please don't turn round and contradict yourself."

"He is quite right, of course, dear Dora; I know it's quite right to be poor and lowly. The Bible says so, but it only means when—when—I mean in your own country."

"Just so," said Arthur; "there is nothing in the Bible, I believe, about founding labour colonies for the thriftless."

"But I feel sure Forster means for the best. He thinks it is his duty, and he always was like that," said his mother.

"He may have seen cause to alter his mind," remarked Arthur carelessly.

"I do hope he has. Well, we shall see him soon. Dora, put down the probable date, dear."

Dora fetched "The Times" and hunted up the date of the next ship. Arthur De Lucy looked at her with secret annoyance, because she did not fall into any of his preconceived pictures of womankind. He cultivated a low opinion of them, and this young girl, so perfectly capable, so natural and ladylike, found no counterpart in his gallery.

"He will be here in ten days, I think; but how strange Mr. Winskell did not write to us about it! Forster might have sent a line."

"Forster never likes writing," said Mrs. Bethune, who could not bear to hear any fault found with her son. "And how was Mr. Winskell, Mr. De Lucy?"

"He was certainly overworking himself."

"It was very good and kind of his wife to spare him. Poor thing, she has led a dull life since her marriage. Her father is a great tie to her."

"They were an uncongenial pair," said

Arthur carelessly; "but that is a very common occurrence."

"You are quite mistaken, isn't he, Dora? It was quite a love match," said Mrs. Bethune, horrified.

Dora blushed; she thought it was very rude of Mr. De Lucy to discuss the Princess's private affairs.

"They are our friends," she said; and Arthur was angry at the girl's rebuke.

"You will stay the night, won't you, Mr. De Lucy?" said hospitable Mrs. Bethune. "Everybody does who comes to this out-of-the-way place, I assure you, and my husband will want to see you. If Forster would think of himself sometimes, and turn into a country gentleman, it would be such a relief; but I dare not say this to him. He has such beautiful ideas about raising the working classes. He is quite a saint."

Arthur accepted the invitation. His London rooms were a little dull, and his sister wanted to come into the country. Why not take lodgings near the Bethunes? Dora Bethune might inspire Ida with more energy. He propounded his plan, and Mrs. Bethune at once suggested his taking the Vicarage, which was to be let for two months. The Bethunes were not going to London for the season this year, but meant to stay in the country, especially if Forster came home. The Rookwoods were coming as soon as possible to them. Mrs. Bethune had already found out all about Arthur De Lucy. His family antecedents were all that could be desired, and he himself was known as a minor poet. She almost feared, too, that if the Vicarage were not let, Forster on his return home would fill it with one of his parties from the East End. She had seen enough of them in Switzerland.

Mr. Bethune was very cordial to the stranger. He was an intellectual, literary man, and such men were not found every day in the country. He took him to his library and allowed him to handle Elzevirs and Aldines to his heart's content. But when Arthur returned to the drawing-room, he found Dora quite a Philistine about first editions.

"Books are made to be read," she said calmly. "Papa cares more for the outside than for the words of wisdom they contain, I believe. Bookworms lose all sense of out-of-door life, I think. They become like fossils. We are a very odd family, you see, for we all differ."

Adela was as smiling and placid as usual. She was dressed in a soft mauve material, which appealed to Arthur's fas-

tidious taste, whilst the shy, silent Mary, who only answered in monosyllables, was to his mind all that a lady should be.

"Dora thinks she is born to set us all straight," said Adela, smiling, "and she is right. I don't know what we should do without her; she can put new strings in Mary's violin, and she does the boys' club accounts for me. She keeps mother up-to-date, and dusts the Elzevirs."

Arthur was lounging in an old-fashioned arm-chair, and his taper fingers smoothed out a wrinkle of the old brocade.

"I am sure Miss Dora is very useful," he said, looking towards that young lady, as she busied herself with mending the back of an old book. He saw the picture of a healthy and sparkling young girl. There was nothing æsthetic about her, her freshness was her greatest charm, but it was just this freshness that amused him.

"I think a woman is made to adorn life, not to keep its wheels oiled. I prefer the type that sits at home and does nothing—at all events in the evening," he said carelessly.

"I think such a woman would be very tiresome to live with," said Dora; "at all events, a man who expected one to sit idle would be terrible."

"Mary answers to your requirements," laughed Adela; "unless she has her violin in her hands, she is always idle."

Mary blushed with shyness.

"I am not idle, Adela. I am thinking all the time. You can't understand a musical mind."

"I meant true idleness," said Arthur, driven on by the spirit of contradiction. "A woman should neither sew nor think."

"Nor mend old books," said Dora. "Here is my twentieth, and I shall go and look for the twenty-first!"

"Dora could manage a whole colony," said Mrs. Bethune sadly. "I can't think where she gets her energy from. It is not from either me or her father."

When Dora was alone with her sister, she gave vent to her opinion of their visitor.

"What a dreadful man, Adela! I want to contradict all he says. Isn't it strange that I admired him abroad? I hope he will go away quite soon. I really almost hate him. He doesn't appreciate Forster and praises up Mr. Winskell, who ought to be hung for forsaking his beautiful wife. I wish mother had not suggested the Vicarage to Mr. De Lucy."

"But the pretty sister was charming,

and at the bottom he is not really disagreeable."

"Nothing matters now that Forster is coming back, but all the same I don't like this man," was Dora's answer.

SULTAN AHMED'S CAPITAL.

THE glory which once encircled Ahmedabad has long since passed away, but although the historic capital has fallen from her first estate of regal splendour, she still occupies an important position as the principal city of Gujerat, and the second of the Bombay Presidency.

Tawny domes and brown minarets of that Indo-Saracenic architecture which forms such an important link in the history of native art cut sharply into the glowing blue of the November sky, and surmount a long line of battlemented walls embowered in the feathery foliage of neem and tamarind. The crowding trees of converging avenues, which lead to the city gates, are inhabited by a colony of long-tailed monkeys, formidable in appearance and of appalling size. Hundreds of beady black eyes peer forth from the leafy fans, and wrinkled hands pelt the passing multitudes with twigs and branches broken off in mischievous eagerness. Quaint brown-coated figures swing by their tails from the ends of forked boughs, or climb up the grey trunks to a lofty perch among the fluttering leaves, and family parties tumble about on the withered grass. A baby monkey tries to shake off the grasp of his mother's skinny hand as she restrains his rambling steps with one encircling arm, while foraging with the other for fallen fruit, finally giving up her unruly offspring to the whiskered paterfamilias, who alternately cuffs and coaxes the weird little form which he carries off to a distant tree. The veneration shown to these poor relations of humanity throughout the State prevents the reduction of their numbers by Government decree, though their thieving propensities cause continual annoyance. The cultus of the monkey meets with comparative forbearance, as being less dangerous to the community than the ancient serpent-worship of the locality, a devotion not yet extinct in conservative India, but gradually yielding to the pressure of English influence and the temptation of the rewards offered by Government for the destruction of venomous reptiles.

A romantic story, like a faded rosebud found within the pages of a dusty chronicle, throws a poetic glamour round the chapter of Indian history which commemorates the foundation of Sultan Ahmed's capital. The Mohammedan conquest of Gujerat was accomplished at the end of the fourteenth century by the Viceroy of the Emperors of Delhi, and the increasing power of the Royal delegates at length enabled them to form an independent dynasty. Ahmed, the second Sultan of the new régime, when riding on his elephant through the jungle which clothed the lower spurs of the Rajputana mountains, became enamoured of Sipra, the beautiful daughter of a black Bheel chieftain, as she came to draw water at sunset from a shallow river which crossed the monarch's path. The burnished brass of the lotah poised upon the graceful head emphasized the dark loveliness of the girl as she stood among the green fronds of the tall bamboos which fringed the stream, and the susceptible monarch succumbed to the untutored charms of the startled wood-nymph, who became a star in the galaxy of beauty which adorned the Royal Zenana. When the Sultan espoused his dusky bride he determined, in true Oriental fashion, to honour his lady-love, and to immortalise his own name by building a new capital on the banks of the brook where the mysterious hand of fate met the barbaric maiden and led her to a throne.

Before carrying out his resolution, Ahmed, with the characteristic submission of a faithful Moslem, desired the Sheikh, who acted as private chaplain and keeper of the Royal conscience, to invoke the intercession of the Prophet Elijah, by way of obtaining the Divine permission. The necessary aid was secured, and the prayer granted on condition that four men bearing the name of Ahmed could be found in Gujerat who had never omitted the prescribed evening prayer when the cry of the Muezzins from the minarets rang across the city at the sunset hour. The monarch and his dervish, Sheikh Ahmed Katta, at once supplied two of the required quartette, and with great difficulty another pair of Ahmeds was discovered whose devotions had been observed with unfailing punctuality. The foundations of the new city were laid, and in A.D. 1413 Ahmedabad, beautiful as a dream, rose upon the rocky banks of the Sarbamati river. In accordance with those vague notions of "meum" and "tuum," deemed

in no wise inconsistent with the utmost fervour of ecstatic piety, the splendid marbles of two ancient Hindu cities were pillaged to supply the building material of the modern capital. So great was the architectural genius of the native artists, refined by centuries of civilisation, that they surpassed their Moslem conquerors, and the buildings of Ahmedabad, rich in historic interest and intrinsic beauty, show the ingenuity of the plastic minds which, by the subtle assimilation of two opposing styles, contrived to blend local Hindu practice with foreign aims and ideas. A noble citadel enclosed the Royal palaces and subsequent tombs, erected on a plateau forty-three acres in extent, and defended by massive fortifications. Richly-veined alabaster and precious woods were imported from distant States for the decoration of the capital, and as the mosques and mansions rose on every side, merchants, weavers, and skilful craftsmen were attracted to Ahmedabad, which soon became a flourishing centre of trade and manufacture. The great wall which still surrounds the city was built by Sultan Mahmud Begada; towers of defence were erected at distances of fifty yards apart, and the folding teak doors of the eighteen city gates bristled with sharp iron spikes to prevent the wood being battered in by the heads of the besieging elephants. After the death of Mahmud in A.D. 1511, the fortunes of the city began to decline. The power of the Gujarati Kings waned, their revenues were reduced, trade was crippled by Portuguese competition, and the harassed State impoverished by the quarrels of turbulent nobles. The reigning monarch failed to quell the tumult, and in A.D. 1572 the malcontents called in the aid of the Emperor Akbar. He entered Ahmedabad almost without opposition, made Gujarat a province of the Mogul Empire, and appointed a Viceroy. Under Mogul sway the city retrieved her fallen fortunes, and attained the zenith of her fame. In A.D. 1695 she was described by a Portuguese traveller as "the greatest city of Hindostan, nothing inferior to Venice for rich silks and gold stuffs curiously wrought with birds and flowers." When the Mogul Empire began to decay in the early years of the eighteenth century, Ahmedabad was distracted by the rivalries of the Imperial nobles, and during a decade of disorder was twice sacked and captured by the Mahrattas. In 1753 they besieged the city for the third time, and for a score

of years it remained in their hands. In 1780 it was taken by the English after a gallant assault, but afterwards restored to the Mahrattas, until, in 1818, at the overthrow of the Peishwa's power, it reverted to the British Government, and became the head-quarters of the northern division of the Bombay army.

The picturesque city is unspoilt by any incongruous medley of that Western element which invariably destroys original form and local colour, and the Oriental conservatism of Ahmedabad enables the spectator to view the distant past through a medium of present reality, which needs no aid from imagination to brighten the tints of the picture. Ancient palaces of native magnates and wealthy foreign merchants line the mouldering streets, the exquisite carving on beam and joist, lintel and doorpost, clear and sharp as though but recently chiselled. Broken pavements sparkle with glass mosaic, vaulted gateways wreathed with arabesque sculpture span the narrow alleys, where cats and monkeys clamber about the roofs in friendly proximity, and every winding lane contains a wealth of lavish ornament on dusky arch and broken fountain. The richly-decorated galleries and cornices of latticed zenanas almost meet across the narrow thoroughfares which diverge from the principal streets, "broad enough for ten bullock-carts to drive abreast," according to the chroniclers of Ahmed's reign. Tapering minarets rise unchanged in their stately grace, and soaring domes, etherealised by the sharp curves of Mogul architecture, resemble gigantic bubbles resting for a moment on the massive solidity of the main building before vanishing into air. Sunny street and shadowy lane frame brilliant pictures of native life, almost unchanged in external aspect since the days of Ahmedabad's power and pride. Every thoroughfare glows with a shifting kaleidoscope of dazzling colours, and the saris of purple, orange, rose, and green look gay as a bed of tulips. Dusky arms glitter with innumerable bangles, and slim ankles bend under the weight of brass and silver circlets edged with tinkling bells. Golden buttons and huge rings set with turquoise and seed-pearl direct attention to the shapely brown noses which they adorn, and filagree frames every ear, the jewelled drops, large as decanter stoppers, resting on the shoulders. Feet and fingers laden with massive rings suggest a possible derivation of "The Lady of Banbury Cross."

from the same Aryan source which originated many of the well-known nursery rhymes.

The costume of the men varies from the flowing robes of the turbaned Mohammedan, and the twisted sheet of the full-dressed Hindu, to the simple brown garb provided by Nature. The black figures of barbaric Bheels, armed with bows and arrows and disdaining any further personal attire than a row of stone amulets threaded on a string of beads, recall the romantic Royal Marriage. The warlike Bheels, resisting the modifying influences of time and civilisation, cling tenaciously to every historic rite which tacitly admits the nominal supremacy of their ancient clan, and even at the installation of a Rajput chief, though this haughty "child of the sun" traces his long descent from an avâtar of the god Vishnu, the mystic "tilka" must be traced on his brow by a Bheel chieftain with blood from his own finger or foot, as the Royal Signet which alone can ratify the ceremony.

Between richly-carved houses and fantastic bazaars with their Oriental mixture of splendour and squalor, we join the throngs which stream through sunlight and shadow in moving ribbons of gorgeous colour. Stalls of pottery, beads, and bangles jostle shops filled with the elaborate paraphernalia of Hindu worship. Brown faces peer across golden piles of plantains and scarlet mounds of pimentos, hedged by spikey vegetables of purple hue and unknown species. Betel-nut sellers crouch in the shade of overhanging gables, with baskets of deep green leaves, smearing them with lime as they wrap them round the nuts which stain every mouth with vivid vermilion. The shops of gold-beaters and braziers, with their flaming crucibles and deafening hammers, flank stalls of dusty and worm-eaten scrolls in Persian and Sanskrit, presided over by turbaned Mohammedans, who smoke their hubble-bubbles undisturbed by customers. Brilliant silks and cottons are drawn from dyers' vats and hung up to dry on lines stretched across the side-streets, the wet folds overhead dripping on the passing crowds, apparently unconcerned by additional splashes of carmine, yellow, and blue on their rainbow-coloured robes. The completion of al-fresco toilettes occupies a considerable share of public attention. Friendly hands pour water over bronzed limbs as a late sleeper rises from his

rickety wooden "charpoy," having spent the hot Indian night in the open street. Sleek black tresses are oiled and combed with studious care, and though the Hindu invariably sits down in the thick dust of the highway to rest after his exertions, the native taste inclines to theoretical cleanliness, and ablutions are repeated at intervals throughout the day. Quaint yellow and scarlet "ekkas" jolt along the rough roads, drawn by hump-backed white bullocks, with gilt and painted horns. Shaggy black buffaloes blunder about in an aimless way, which requires the constant supervision of a brown boy lightly clad in a blue necklace, who seizes ragged tails and twisting horns according to the exigencies of the erratic course pursued by the bewildered herd.

Grimy fakirs roll in the dust, and perform extravagant antics before an admiring crowd, which applauds every gymnastic feat accomplished by the emaciated fanatics, whose only garb consists of the red or white lozenge-shaped prayer marks which cover their lean bodies. Nautch-girls in tinselled masks gyrate slowly to the sound of tom-tom and conch-shell. The sharp twang of a vina sounds from the latticed corridor of a zenana, and as a string of camels ambles down the street in a cloud of dust we dive under a horse-shoe arch into a green court shaded by mango-trees, and surrounded by a wooden cloister used as a carpet factory. A dozen boys knot the many-coloured wools on strings stretched over a rude frame, and a man in the centre of the group dictates the pattern to his pupils, who work out the exquisite design with incredible speed and dexterity; their thin brown hands darting up and down with unerring accuracy, while the rich groups of softly-tinted flowers in an arabesque bordering grow as though by magic under our wondering eyes.

A second courtyard is devoted to wood-carving, another local industry which displays the artistic genius of the inhabitants, by boldness of design and delicacy of finish.

In the cavernous gloom of an ancient oil-press, which occupies an arched crypt beneath a ruined tower, a patient donkey crushes a load of olives under heavy grind-stones after the unchanged fashion of antiquity, and a man sits on the moss-grown steps embroidering white silk with flowers and foliage in gold and silver thread. The serene unconsciousness of any incongruity between dusty surround-

ings and dainty handiwork is a phase of native character which contributes to the picturesque charm of Indian cities. Every trade and occupation is carried on in public, and the street is practically the home of the Hindu citizen, for the shanty where he stows his few worldly goods, probably consisting of an iron kettle and a "char-poy," is only regarded as a shelter from the rains.

We take refuge from the noonday sun in the beautiful Jain Temple, encrusted with elaborate carving which represents a lifetime of labour spent on every marble column. Images of Buddha in gold, silver, and alabaster line the walls, and the diamond-studded eyes of the statues glitter with baleful light from the mysterious gloom of each sculptured niche. From the barbaric magnificence of these native shrines we turn with relief to the chastened beauty of the Jama Masjid, crowned by fifteen sunburnt domes. Marble vistas of polished pillars gleam through the dim twilight of the vast interior, where the sculptured lace of the arched windows excludes the heat and glare of day. A door in the east wall of the court which contains this superb mosque leads to the mausoleum of Sultan Ahmed, a domed building containing a group of white marble tombs. A vaulted gateway opens into a second court, surrounded by the tombs of the Queens, beautiful in form and detail, and encircled by screens of pierced alabaster. Beyond the Jama Masjid a superb stone structure known as the Tin Darvaja, or Three Gateways, crosses the main street. Passing beneath the vaulted arches, we reach the ruined Bhadar, a scene of desertion and decay, but rich in architectural relics of world-wide fame. One of the crumbling mosques, now used as a public office, is adorned with such exquisite tracery of snowy marble in stems and branches, that Fergusson, in his "History of Indian Architecture," declares it to be "more like a work of nature than any other detail that has ever been designed by the best architects of Greece, or of the Middle Ages." A deeper interest belongs to the mosque of Rani Sipra, "not far from the Astodiya Gate," and the beauteous vision of pale marbles and roseate stone encrusted with a wealth of chiselled embroidery is considered one of the fairest temples in the world. This sacred edifice is locally known as "The Gem of Ahmedabad," and many touching traditions linger round it. As

the court of the mosque contains the tomb of the Sultan's barbaric Begum, we may conclude that the Bheel maiden, "forgetting her own country and her father's house," embraced the faith of her royal lord and lover. A tiny stone slab at the side of the Sultana's sculptured monument marks the grave of her favourite cat, which expired—so the story goes—on hearing of the decease of its mistress.

When the heat of day declines we drive through avenues of gum-arabic, peepul, and tamarind, to the beautiful Kankaria Tank, a noble artificial lake made by one of the early Kings. Luxuriant gardens fringe the shore with thickets of banyan and aisles of palm, brightened by blossoming trees of red poinsettia and gold mohur. Marble steps lead down to the water, and a tessellated causeway crosses the blue tank to an islet of flowers and ferns. A gilded kiosk crowns a rocky knoll, and a balcony draped with a curtain of purple Bougainvillea commands exquisite views of lake and sky transfigured by the glow of a flaming sunset. A wonderful peach-like bloom flushes the fiery gold, and a pageant of changing hues surges across the radiant heaven in waves of rose and violet light, like the overflowing tide from some invisible ocean of glory beyond earthly ken. Even the clouds of dust are changed into showers of powdered gold, and the amber light lingers over the earth as though loth to die away. The clear-cut shadow of every tree lies in a dense black cone upon the sun-bathed grass, and the gnome-like figures of native "bheesties" filling goat-skins at the water's edge to slake the road which encircles the lake, look as though carved in ebony. The red and white "saris" of native women make patches of colour under the tamarind-trees, where rice for the evening meal is cooking over a fire of sticks. Brown hands are hastily thrust into a bag which lies on the ground, and a shower of rice is thrown into the water, that the visitors may see the great shoals of fish which spring up to catch the precious grains. Green parrots flutter homeward to roost, and the burning day of India fades into the "purple peace" of the moonlit night. The gorgeous colouring of Oriental life and landscape is subdued into sable and silver, and in the deepening gloom which veils earth and sky, the very silence of eternity seems to fall like healing dew upon the restless and passion-tossed heart of the sad and weary world.

THE MONTH OF MARY.

ALL the fields are gay with "bluettes," all the river banks with broom;
Where the west wind sweeps above them, sways each long acacia bloom;
Where the sunshine dazzles downward, blue, and green, and white, the waves
Roll upon the golden sandbanks, crash beneath the hollowed caves;
Where the low breeze laughs and whispers, the green aspen shadows vary,
Nature to the earth is calling, "Waken, 'tis the month of Mary."

Deck her altars with the flowers, blossoming for fate so fair;
Light the tall white candles for her; fling the incense to the air;
Drape in snowy robes the children, who, all fresh and young and sweet,
Come to pay their virgin tribute at the Virgin Mother's feet;
Bring the first-fruits of the orchard, of the vineyard, of the dairy,
Give the best and brightest to her; is it not the month of Mary?

Chant her hymns when morning brightens over sea and over land,
When the sunrise dyes to glory her carved Image on its stand.
Chant her hymns when moon is fullest over bight and over bay,
Touching to a solemn beauty the great mountains far away;
When the moon makes silvery pathway, fit for foot of fitting fairy,
Rising from sea depths to tell us: waken, 'tis the month of Mary.

Frown who will and mock who dares it: in these cold and careless days,
It is good, this happy worship; it is good, this people's praise;
Good to see the gifts unsparing, good to see the lighted shrine,
Good to see, 'mid doubt and drifting, something left of the Divine.
O followers of the Virgin-born, of judgements harsh be chary,
And with the childlike sunny South, salute the month of Mary.

THE OLD ROAD TO CAMBRIDGE.

THE way to Cambridge begins at Shore-ditch Church, of which the classic portico, and queer but not unpleasing tower, show hazily in the doubtful light of a spring morning, and lies straight onward, under the iron girders, where there opens out a prospect beyond, not of groves and flowery meads, but of the dingy-looking roofs of Kingland, and of a vast wilderness of almost squalid dwellings, without relief from tower or turret, temple or theatre; a workhouse, a factory, or a police-station being the only buildings that rise above the general roof-line. As dull, and straight, and flat as you please is the Kingland Road, but it may have been pleasant enough in the days of Hobson, the carrier, commemorated by Milton, who

must have passed this way often enough when a student at Cambridge.

Things are more lively and pleasant about Stoke Newington, no longer an ideal retreat for a quiet domestic poet like Mrs. Barbauld, or such an one as good Dr. Watts, whose last resting-place is in Abney Park Cemetery, the opening to which, with glimpses of white tombs and statuary, is perhaps the brightest thing we have yet seen on the way.

When you come to the rise to Stamford Hill a change comes over the scene, the road widens, broad sidewalks appear, protected or ornamented with posts and massive chains. Here is a region of wealth and comfort, and here we get glimpses of the marshy plains of the Lea, all in the freshest green of spring, and of purple heights beyond seen through a shimmering haze of verdure.

And then we come upon Tottenham and a lane leading to Bruce Grove. The Kings of Scotland once were lords of Tottenham, and though the castle has made way for a big modern building, the grounds adjoining or part of them have been converted into a public park. And there is Scotland Green on the other side of the road—a queer Dutch kind of scene with a little river flowing through, and bridges to each man his cottage, and queer little courts of weather-boarded cottages, and bridges again, and more courts, which are not affairs of yesterday, but had their share in what was going on lang syne. And what nice old-fashioned, dignified red-brick houses bask in the sunshine behind their great gates of twisted ironwork! There is one with a sundial on the gable end, and the motto, "Ut umbra sumus," which seems a good sundial motto and Horatian, too. And the old almshouses are still there with their heavy chimney-stacks and low-browed doorways, and the little gardens in front bordered with cockleshells, and the dedicatory inscription of the founder, Baltassar Sanches, whom old Bedwell describes as "a Spanyard born, the first confectioner or comfit-maker, and the grane master of all that professe that trade in this kingdome." But if Sanches was the first, good Bedwell, how shall we account for the comfit-makers' wives who swore so softly and soothly according to one Master William Shakespeare?

A pleasant chronicler is old Bedwell, once parson of Tottenham High Cross, whose book is dated 1631, and dedicated to Hugh Lord Colerane, "Lord and Cheefe

Commander there." In his time the main road from Scotland to London "was along our highway," and so it was in Elizabeth's days, and earlier still, even to the era of the barons' wars. It is, in fact, the old North Road, older even than the old North Road of our coaching days. Parson Bedwell himself was a scholar of some repute, and employed upon the then authorised version of the Bible, and he edited an amusing old poem descriptive of the "Tournament of Tottenham," which was fought with staves for the hand of Tibbe, the daughter of Randell the Reeve, the prize being won by Perkin the Potter. As to which Bedwell writes: "The red-brick earth fit for Bricks—yes, and for Potters, too. Perkin, who wonne and carried away the bride, was of that occupation, and liv'd by that trade here." No Tottenham pottery has come down to these latter days.

That we have come to the end of Tottenham Street is certified by the appearance of the famous "Bell" at Edmonton. The sign is of the Gilpin period, but the exterior of the inn itself is modern. The "wash" too, where he made such a splash, has long ago been bridged over. More recently the "Bell" was a house of call for Charles Lamb, who would often accompany his friends as far as this to drink a parting glass ere they took the stage for London. In Edmonton Church on the left is the tomb of "Gentle Elia." But in his time Edmonton was almost a country village, while now to see the rows of houses springing up everywhere is quite bewildering. It is the same in Tottenham, too; these places have almost doubled their population in the last ten years. It seems to rain small houses, and after a little fine weather long lines of cottages are seen growing up like rows of cabbages. Soon the whole of the great Lea valley will be thickly packed with an immense industrial population. Then we may bid adieu to the old traditions of the place. How King Alfred drained Tot'nam marshes, and thus dished the Danes, who had sailed up to Ware with the flowing tide, by leaving them stranded high and dry with their galleys. Or of the "merry devil of Edmonton," originally one Peter Fabell, astrologer and alchemist, who sold himself to the Evil One, but managed to evade his bargain, and whose sonorous threat may be remembered:

I'll make the brined sea to rise at Ware,
And drown the marshes unto Stratford Bridge.

And who will then care to remember the witch of Edmonton—less happy than the wizard—whose fate it was to be burnt, A.D. 1621. The village green is still in existence where this holocaust took place, and close by is the Edmonton station, from the platform of which you look down upon a fine old house, a vast and rambling place, with charming grounds about it, and one grand old cedar of Lebanon that stands there like a giant contemplating the army of pigmy cottages that hems it round. A workman standing by with his fork recalls how, in the heavy snow of two years ago, a huge branch, loaded with snow, broke off with a report like that of a cannon. What a work of beneficence it would be to rescue that grand old tree from the builder's axe, and to turn that pleassance into a public garden!

You may call it country if you like, but it is still street all the way from London, though pleasant enough with glimpses of the green meadows by the river, and the heights of Epping Forest, while on the other hand we have the peak of High Barnet and the ridge of Hadley woods. Then we have Ponder's End, with its plashy road to the Forest, past the huge thundering water-mills that once belonged to the Knights Templars. Enfield Highway shows its rows of shops, and beyond is Enfield Wash, the scene of a wonderful cock-and-bull story of an abduction by gipsies, of which one Elizabeth Canning was the heroine, some time in the last century. The gipsy race is still to be traced about Enfield in dark and handsome female faces. There was good trade in fortune-telling along here, what time the gay bloods posted down with four or six horses to Newmarket, ribbons and stars as plenty as blackberries, and all agog for fun, and flinging about chaff and guineas with lordly indifference.

With so many wealthy travellers on the road it might have been expected that the highwaymen would have made a good harvest; but the highway seems to have been bordered with dwellings from the earliest times, and there were few lonely stretches of road within reach of London where the robber could ply his trade to advantage. Yet Macaulay tells us how, after the peace of Ryswick, a band of discharged soldiers, thirty or forty in number, built themselves huts by Waltham Cross, and with sword and pistol levied contributions on all who passed that way. The district, too, had its own noted high-

wayman, Dr. William Shelton, who was born of respectable parents at Turnford, Cheahunt, on the very highway, and was 'prentice to a 'potecary at Enfield. He would have run off with the 'potecary's sister, of Stoke Newington, where he was assistant, but was captured, and cudgelled for the attempt, and at last he carried off a widow's daughter, married her at the Fleet, and drew her fortune from the City Chamberlain. Then, like Smollett, having little practice at home, he got an appointment as surgeon abroad, and sailed for Antigua, where he lived a jolly life, a prime favourite among the islanders. But roystering and drinking brought him into trouble, and he came home to settle as a doctor at Buntingford, and afterwards practised at Braughin, both places on the Cambridge road. Failing to make a living by his drugs, he bought a pair of pistols and a good horse, and was soon well known and very successful on the highway, where his courtesy and pleasing manners soon won the admiration even of his victims. But all this did not save him from the gallows at Tyburn, where he suffered in 1732.

Another local practitioner was John Everett of Hitchin, where his father had an estate of three hundred pounds a year. He was bound 'prentice to a salesman in the City, but was 'pressed like Billy Taylor and sent to sea. From his ship he volunteered into the army; served in the wars; was discharged; and became successively catchpole, foot-guard, turnkey, and tapster. In this last capacity he kept the "tap" at the Fleet Prison, and might have made a fortune out of the poor debtors; but shared the disgrace of the keeper who was discharged after an enquiry ordered by the House of Commons. On this he took to the road, captivated a widow of fortune by his dashing gallantry, married her and spent her fortune, and then to the road again. But he had lost touch with the profession, and soon disgraced himself by turning Queen's evidence, after which he fell to the level of a mere footpad, and as such was executed in 1729.

Turpin also was of the neighbourhood, and it was on the Cambridge road, not far from Waltham Cross, that he overtook King, another famous highwayman, and not knowing or recognising him, demanded his money. King laughed and proposed a partnership, which Turpin accepted. The pair had a retreat in a cave, it is said, in Epping Forest, whence they sallied out to

prey upon travellers to Cambridge and Newmarket. In the end King was surprised and captured at some tavern on the road, and Turpin, unable to rescue him, shot him, and so saved him from the gallows.

With such tales as these we beguile the way till we come in sight of a fine and ancient cross,

The stately crosse of Elnor, Henrie's wife,

writes an ancient poet, who would assuredly be plucked in "history," but a genuine and most interesting monument of antiquity. The upper part of the cross has been well restored, but the lower stage is wonderfully preserved, considering all the ill-usage and neglect it has suffered, and carries the three leopards of the Plantagenets, the arms of the Queen, and other bearings of heraldic significance. At one time the cross was almost built into the wall of an adjoining tavern, but now the whole area has been cleared, and wears a quaint and pleasant aspect, the road a little further on being spanned with the sign of the "Four Swans," which claims to have been on the ground before the cross, and to have witnessed Queen Eleanor's funeral procession, and entertained the throng of knights and barons bold who followed in its train. Opposite is the "Falcon," and doubtless both the houses were good old coaching inns, and now entertain a good throng of cyclists and others.

And although a mile from the highway, it would not do to miss Waltham Abbey, the square tower of which shows over the green meadow flats. How rich are these meadows which we pass, pastured with happy-looking cows; and how pleasantly the many river channels wind among them! A high arched bridge with quaint old-fashioned houses beyond gives passage to the town. Below is the lock, with a barge coming slowly in, and over a green hazy screen of willows and poplars rise the tall chimneys of the Small Arms Factory, while every now and then a dull rumble from the proof-house tells of arms preparing for the cruel work of war. As for Waltham itself, it is all gunpowder and explosives. You ask an agricultural-looking man how things are looking, expecting to hear about the crops. "Well," he says, shaking his head, "Cordite and Schultz's powder's pretty busy, but black powder's as flat as ever so." And then remembering how

The old Lee brags of the Danish blood,

and that crossing it one enters the old Danelagh, as settled between Alfred and Guthrum, you ask, "Is this the old Lee?" A youth replies: "This ain't no Lea, this is the Guv'ment river."

The old High Bridge Street leads straight to the west front of the Abbey Church, and there is a pleasant path through the old graveyard, with a seat round the bole of a once noble elm, a path which issues in a pleasant antique fashion under an old gate-house, and so into the quiet little town, with its quaint gabled houses, not strikingly picturesque, but not glaringly out of keeping with hoar antiquity. The church ends abruptly, chancel and transepts are gone; somewhere by that mound of turf stood the high altar, and there undistinguished beneath the accumulated mould of centuries reposes the dust of Harold—"Infelix."

To gain admission to the church it is necessary to find the old lady who has the keys, and the rumour of the town has it that she is at work, inside, with the doors locked. But a little lassie is found who is bidden to "make grannie hear," and the sight of the little golden-haired girl trying to rattle the big iron grille, with the bulk of the old church looming above her, is not unsuggestive. But even in stronger hands the grille won't rattle much; when a strong-armed youth appears, who shows how to clatter the big wooden gates inside, with a sound like thunder. "Wake Duncan with your knocking," or Harold rather, but there is no result as regards the old lady. Perchance she sleepeth, or she may be a little hard of hearing, and the walls are thick and strong! Then grannie appears from a quite unexpected quarter, not having been in the church at all, and everything goes well.

That the grand old pillars within, the Romanesque arches, the quaint mouldings, really were part of Harold's church is pretty generally acknowledged. And the story of the finding of the Holy Cross, in honour of which the church was first founded, is as well attested as such narratives can be. It was found in Somersetshire at a spot that still abounds in Roman remains, among which there is nothing improbable in the discovery of Christian emblems. The lord of the district, Tovi, the standard-bearer of Canute, came to view the wonderful find, and ordered it to be placed on a waggon drawn by twelve oxen, so that it might go where it listed; and of all places in

the world it would only come to Waltham, where the Dane had recently built a hunting lodge, and there a church, probably a wooden one, was raised to receive it. Anyhow, there was a good English relic and a good English miracle for the encouragement of those who vowed with Harold that they would keep England for the English. So Waltham became the shrine of the nation's hopes, and Harold adorned it with all the richness of Byzantine workmanship, inlaying its walls and pillars with brass—of which traces, it is said, are still found. And here, returning victorious from the fight of Stamford Bridge, Harold first heard of the Norman invasion; and here he put up his prayers for victory, when Turkill, the sacristan, saw the crucifix bend, as if in sorrow. In the fight the war-cry of Harold was "Holy Rood!" And to the Holy Rood two faithful brethren of the cross brought back his mangled body.

Harold the King is still honoured in Waltham. The old lady with the keys speaks of him with a hushed respect, that contrasts with the familiar tone adopted to the "good gentleman" in ruff and doublet whose effigy sleeps in the corner there, beside the good lady his wife, and above the good young gentlemen and ladies his children kneeling all in a row. And you must not leave Waltham without seeing Harold's Bridge, the relics of a very ancient bridge over the mill-stream not far from where the Abbey fish-ponds were, and past the old gateway, which is all that is left of the domestic buildings. Coming back you will probably find yourself in Romeland, now the cattle market, the rents of which, tradition says, once went to the Holy See. And although the town lies low, and the marshes and watercourses give aguish suggestions, yet here as old Fuller says, who once was parson here, "As many pleasant hills and prospects are, as any place in England doth afford."

Resisting the temptation to follow a pleasant field-path over the green hills towards Copt Hall, let us return to the highway towards Cambridge, where the long street of Cheahunt presently begins; running on in undulating fashion, not quite a town, and yet rather more than a village. Over there fine clumps of trees and tufted groves mark the site of Theobalds, an ancient seat, once the favourite residence of James the First, but long since dismantled and pulled down. And

by the church which is a good way on there should be Pengelley, where Richard Cromwell ended his days in retirement under the name of Clarke. Visitors, perhaps, had better ask for him under the latter name, for nobody seems to recognise that of Cromwell. "Never heard of him," said one old lady. "But then, I ain't been here many years." But the feature of Cheshunt is not its houses, but its gardens: acres of glass, miles of subterranean hothouses called pits, from which issue red tomatoes, juicy green cucumbers, and all kinds of novelties for the London markets. Roses, too—everybody knows the fame of Cheshunt for roses.

From Cheshunt the road runs on in pleasant undulatory fashion to Ware, whose name is supposed to represent the weir that the Danes built to keep up a good head of water for their ships. How it happens that the road passes through Ware is told succinctly by old Camden: "When the Barons warres against King John were waxed hotte, this Ware, presuming much upon their lord the Baron of Ware, turned London Highway to it." But the bridge was claimed by the bailiff of Hertford, and closed by a chain of which the said bailiff kept the key. Whereupon Baron Sayer de Quincy coming that way, broke the chain and threw it into the river, and threatened to throw the bailiff after it. From which time it seems the bridge has been free.

Ware has been too prosperous with its malt-kilns to have much of a history; though the industry is an ancient one, and an Elizabethan poet writes:

Then by the Crowne and all the innes of Ware,
And so approaching to the late built bridge,
They see the barges loading malt apace.

Elsewhere, the writer speaks of the "guested town of Ware," alluding to the numerous travellers, and, perhaps, to the great bed which may have served as the "table round" of the knights who met at the great tournament of Ware.

It is a pretty country all about, with enamelled meads and crystal streams, among which rich maltsters have built themselves pleasant mansions. And so to Buntingford through Puckeridge, where the old pack is still in existence which John Leech delighted to join, and from whose jolly farmers and rustic squires he drew the inspiration of many of his best sketches.

And now we come to a country of rolling downs, with Royston Heath as a culmi-

nating point crowned by ancient barrows and tumuli. And the steep High Street of Royston, with the "Bull" at the top, leads us to the dull level of Cambridgeshire, with church steeples scattered here and there, and one or two pleasant villages on the way, but with nothing to arrest the attention till we reach the groves of Trumpington and the outskirts—of a plain and sober character—of the old country town and famous seat of learning.

CRUEL KINDNESS.

"THAT is Tom Whitley," said a friend to me as we sat one evening in the smoking-room at the "Addison." "Tom never has a good word for anybody."

Then my friend went on to give a catalogue of the evil deeds wrought by Tom Whitley's tongue; how this and that reputation had been blasted; how the happiness of half-a-dozen families had been destroyed, and the financial credit of more than one house of business damaged by its malignant wagging, till I began to feel that the man's personality had a queer sort of fascination for me.

As long as we sat in the club smoking-room I could not keep my eyes off his face, and as I walked home through the crowded streets, and as I lay awake in bed that night, it haunted me as the manifestation of a power which willed evil rather than good—as near an approach to the classic Miltonic Satan as one can hope to meet in this workaday age.

Having reviewed once more his destructive career, I began to speculate on the justice and wisdom of allowing such pestilent wolves to roam the earth, and to figure, as a sort of paradise, a state of things in which no one should speak of his fellow save in laudatory words, where anything like a disparaging remark should be visited by severe penalties; when, suddenly, my brain was flooded by a reflex current of memories, memories which taught me that I was living in a world governed by compromise, and that there is not one of the problems of our being which ought not to be looked at from more than one side. It would not even do to lay down, as an unarguable proposition, that a world in which all evil-speaking, lying, and slandering were unknown must of necessity be a pleasant world to live in. The pendulum might swing too far over to the other side, and

we might be landed in a state where the honey-pot alone was in use.

In the world as we know it there is no very close approximation to this condition; but here and there one may come across people who have a good word for everybody, and a very deluge of honey and butter for all those whom they write down as their friends. The consequence of this over-expenditure of sweetness is not fortunate. Horace has wisely set it down that the sage runs in danger of being classed as a fool, and the good man as a knave, should either one pursue his favourite virtue "*ultra quam satis*." So it is with these over-charitable folk. People around them soon begin to gauge the value of good words which are showered upon everybody alike, good, bad, or indifferent; and as to their special friends, who are favoured with their commendation and made the object of their good deeds, they come off the worst of all. We may like our friends well enough, but it is by no means so sure that we shall like our friends' friends. We certainly shall not like them—nay, it is almost certain we shall begin to detest them cordially—if we have to listen to the singing of their praises in season and out of season.

In Mr. Barlow's day the ingenuous youth used to be taught how the Athenians, becoming weary of hearing Aristides called the Just, sent him about his business, and this untoward fate is one of which the intimate friends of good-natured people are most in danger.

Of all the friends I have ever had, or ever shall have, I cannot fancy myself liking any one more than I like Mrs. Riversdale—or shall I be more exact and more candid, and say more than I liked her up to the time when she was seized with her sudden and violent attachment to Mrs. Jenkins? Mrs. Riversdale was good to look at, clever, witty, sweet-tempered, and companionable in the highest degree. She was one of those people—one does not meet too many of them—whom one is always glad to see and sorry to part from. Elderly gentlemen adored her; she was the idol of children; and undergraduates—terribly critical fellows these—have been heard to say that they approved of her. She was the delight of a large circle, giving out the warmth and radiance of a sun of society to all near, when in an ill-starred moment Mrs. Jenkins—a most worthy woman, and one of whom I, albeit strongly provoked, wish to speak with all

kindness—thrust herself, an intrusive asteroid, into our system.

The first time I met Mrs. Riversdale after this untoward event I was conscious of a change. There were many familiar subjects, innocent banalities, over which we were in the habit of gossiping pleasantly whenever we might meet. There were reminiscences of a Swiss tour, during which we had foregathered, and divers experiences collected together in riverside rambles, which would invariably crop up during the first hour of our meeting, so pleasant were the associations hanging round them. Then I wrote a little, and Mrs. Riversdale sketched a little, and of course it was always necessary to discuss the scribblings and smudgings we had each perpetrated since we last met. But on this fateful occasion I was not long in finding out that, for my companion, the past above described had lost its charm. I found it impossible to get in half-a-dozen words about any of the dear old topics without some attempt on Mrs. Riversdale's part to shift the conversation round to Mrs. Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins dominated the loftiest peak we had ever scaled in the Bernese Oberland. She meandered through the lush flats of Eynsham and Bablock Hythe. She was the point of sight in every sketch, and the central interest of every story. In short, King Charles the First's head, as apprehended by Mr. Dick, was nowhere compared with Mrs. Jenkins in the matter of ubiquity.

I soon discovered that it would be necessary, figuratively speaking, to give Mrs. Riversdale her head. I hoped that, if I should allow her to talk about the excellencies of Mrs. Jenkins for an hour or so, we might then get back to discourses of *auld lang syne*; but not a bit of it. She found it necessary to give me a full account of Mrs. Jenkins's youth and bringing up, of her marriage and settlement in life, of her many virtues, and of the unprecedented series of misfortunes which had since befallen her. This last-named catalogue seemed inexhaustible. I lost all count of time, and sleep fell upon me, and I slumbered on till I was aroused by the bang of the door behind Mrs. Riversdale as she left the room, offended at my want of interest in her friend. This was the first little rift within the lute, the first shadow of a misunderstanding that had ever fallen between us, and it was all for the sake of—Mrs. Jenkins.

But Mrs. Riversdale was far too sweet-

tempered a woman to harbour any resentment for a trivial slight like this. The next time we met—it was when she paid us a visit in town—she was as amiable and enthusiastic as ever, and she had not been long in the house before she said she hoped she wasn't disturbing our plans in any way, but she had fixed to meet Mrs. Jenkins that afternoon, and go to inspect the Poplar Girls' Reformatory, in which Mrs. Jenkins was deeply interested, and very likely she wouldn't be back till to-morrow morning, or perhaps evening; everything must depend on Mrs. Jenkins's arrangements.

Now as we were rather proud of knowing such a charming woman as Mrs. Riversdale, we had planned a little dinner for that same evening, and a little luncheon party for the morrow, to show her off to our other friends. Here was a cold douche, a blasting of all our plans. I ventured to make something of a protest, explaining what our arrangements were, but Mrs. Riversdale cut me short at once. There was no help for it. If she didn't go to Poplar Mrs. Jenkins would be disappointed, and such a contingency was unthinkable. Of course, she was sorry not to meet our friends, but——. She did not finish the sentence aloud, but I knew well enough that she finished it mentally—"but what are all these compared with Mrs. Jenkins?"

From this it will appear that Mrs. Jenkins was no light trial to Mrs. Riversdale's friends, even when the world was going well with her; but the worst was yet to come with the advent of those misfortunes to which allusion has already been made. I forget now whether they arose on account of some banking collapse, or through the downward career of the rupee in India, or through the agricultural crisis at home. It matters very little what might be the cause of her calamities. The origin thereof would very soon have been annihilated by the overwhelming presence of the result as set forth by the activity and eloquence of Mrs. Riversdale. From this time forth, good soul! her entire energies were consumed in getting up and administering a series of Jenkins endowment funds. First of all, Mrs. Jenkins was to be made comfortable for life. To compass this the governors of a charity for decayed gentlewomen were assailed by Mrs. Riversdale, on pleas which would not, I fear, have stood severe cross-examination, and compelled to disgorge a portion of their funds for Mrs. Jenkins's benefit. Next the Prime Minister

himself was attacked with the view of getting a grant from the Civil List, but this attempt failed, and then the great bazaar movement was initiated. In this Mrs. Riversdale had her work cut out for her, but she did not let the rest of the world remain in ignorance of her mission. The rest of the world was informed in good set terms that it must come over and help her, and it was at this period that the loyalty of her friends was put to its severest trial. It happened that, shortly after it had set in, we went to pay her a visit, and I well remember that she would sit from morning till night over a complicated bit of embroidery for a Jenkins bazaar, hardly able to spare the time to give a word to her guests; but if I should happen to take up a book or a newspaper, or if my wife touched the piano, we were reminded sharply enough that the picture-frames I had promised to decorate were hardly begun, and the Shetland wool, concerning which my wife had made a rash covenant, wouldn't get itself made into shooting-stockings and Cardigan vests simply by being looked at. I will simply remark that the picture-frames and the woollen articles were all ready by the date of the bazaar. The picture-frames were bought by a blind old gentleman, and as to my wife's handiwork, I wear one of the Cardigan vests myself in cold weather. It was left over unsold, and Mrs. Riversdale wheedled me into buying it, a transaction somewhat like seething the kid in its mother's milk; but as the money all went to Mrs. Jenkins I suppose I ought to be satisfied.

After the bazaar there came a run of private theatricals, out of which, strange as it may seem, Mrs. Riversdale reaped a handsome profit; though I have been led to understand that this triumph was only achieved by the sacrifice of several life-long friendships. In any case, bazaars and theatricals combined brought in enough money to set Mrs. Jenkins going; and those friends who still remained loyal to Mrs. Riversdale began to hope that they had heard the last of her protégée; but we had forgotten that the wafes and strays at Poplar, in whom Mrs. Jenkins took a kindly interest, were still to be considered. More bazaars and more theatricals followed, and consequently more defections of long-suffering friends. An opportune call to the other side of the world relieved me from any share in the last-named move-

ment; but I had not set foot in England more than a fortnight before I heard that Mrs. Riversdale was enquiring after me, as she wanted me to help her in getting up a "café chantant," the latest invention of charitable torture, the proceeds of which were to provide the eldest Jenkins boy with an outfit as an emigrant to British Columbia. My wife developed a bronchial cold just in time to allow us to effect a retreat to Torquay; but the "café chantant" was a triumphant success notwithstanding.

Not long ago I met Mrs. Jenkins by chance, and passed an hour or two in her society during a railway journey; and, in spite of the weary times I had passed, and of the bread and water of affliction I had eaten and drunk on her account, I was constrained to admit that she was a very charming woman. As I said good-bye to her with regret, I could not help feeling that I should have absolutely fallen in love with her, had not her praises been sung to me too long and too loud by her zealous friend, and had I not been made to purchase heaps of things I did not want, and to make a fool of myself as an amateur comedian, all for her benefit. Mrs. Jenkins was well-dressed, and had everything handsome about her, and travelled first-class, so I at least had evidence that I had not toiled under Mrs. Riversdale's whip in vain. I did not think it prudent to ask any questions about the hope of the family in British Columbia. I trust he is doing well in the backwoods, and that he will remain there; for, should he find the work too hard and the surroundings too rough and distasteful, and elect to go in for the army or the diplomatic career, I am quite sure that his mother, aided by Mrs. Riversdale and her forced recruits, will set to work to manage it.

I have recently alluded to Mrs. Jenkins's amiability and charm. I am quite sure it is on account of these, and for no other reason, that I do not cordially detest her; had she been a mere good-natured commonplace person, I should not have found a word to say in her favour. But if I had been introduced to her by Tom Whibley's abuse and innuendo, and not by Mrs. Riversdale's excessive eulogy, I should have kicked him downstairs, and have enrolled myself her devoted champion ever after; indeed, I fancy if I were to hear that worthy discourse after his wont about the most ordinary uninteresting person I know, I should at once discern in that person talents and virtues he or she never possessed and

never dreamt of claiming. I have often wondered what could be the use of people like Tom Whibley, and lo, I have found out.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*The Thirteenth Drylain*," "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benefit of Clergy*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II.

CLOSE to one of the windows of the dining-room of a house in Bloomsbury stood a girl with a letter in her hand.

She had gone to the window for a better light by which to read it. For although the time of year was April, it was one of those mornings not uncommon in London in early spring—mornings in which everything seems to be overspread by a dull mist, unlike a fog in that it is thin and light in substance, and yet very like a fog in the dim yellow light it produces. This sort of mist is generally the prelude to a bright day, and it is possibly this fact; possibly the curious chill, fresh feeling of spring that pervades it even in the dullest of streets and squares; which gives to it an extraordinary and almost exhilarating sort of suggestiveness.

The dining-room was characteristic of the kind of London house, a house neither obviously rich nor obviously poor, and its appointments were neither exactly comfortable nor uncomfortable. There was no definite fault to be found with any one of them; the rows of worn, leather-cushioned chairs were well kept and carefully dusted; the sideboard was solid and good, with a polish on it that had gone a long way to obliterate its chips and dents, and the very few ornaments on the mantelshelf were valuable in their way, and had received nothing but careful handling. The effect of the whole was marred simply by a generally smudgy look that pervaded everything, a sort of dull dinginess that was by no means the result of untidiness or want of precision, but was simply inherent in the conditions of the room, and seemed like a sort of emanation from the dull outlook.

Against this background of room and window the girl's figure stood out very distinctly. There was a clearness about its outlines that seemed to isolate them sharply from the surroundings, and to accentuate the contrast between them and it. It was a slight figure, or perhaps it would be

truer to say a thin one, for there was nothing whatever of delicacy or fragility about it. It was firm, well knit, and well proportioned; the figure of a woman who possesses, and has always possessed, excellent physical health; and the thinness was a mere normal characteristic, such as her height, which was rather remarkable, being several inches beyond the conventional womanly five feet four.

Her head, which was bent over her letter, displaying thereby a graceful curve in a neck set on strong, rather square shoulders, was beautifully shaped, and covered with thick dark hair, brown, with a good deal of colour in it. It was very curly, and being cut quite short, clung in little close rings all over the back of her head and all round her smooth forehead. Beneath a pair of straight, dark eyebrows, delicately traced in spite of their darkness, were large grey eyes. A strong and rather compressed mouth completed the character of a sharply-cut chin, which slightly over-accentuated the oval form of the face. It was, taken altogether, a very remarkable face, and the most remarkable point about it, as about every other face worthy of notice, was its expression. This consisted in a mixture very rare, and very difficult to describe; for it was at once calm and self-possessed, and eager and enthusiastic. In this combination lay its charm, for charm it had, as no one who knew its owner ever attempted to deny.

She looked about twenty-seven years old; as a matter of fact, she was twenty-five.

Her dress was a plain grey tweed, as severe in style as any woman's dress may be, and no ornament of any kind was visible about her, except a ring on the left hand, with which she had grasped the window-frame. It was an unusual hand when observed carefully, and by no means the ordinary woman's hand. The fingers were long and firm, with a certain character about them which was plainly the outcome in some way or other of their possessor's life.

She came to the end of the letter and turned back, slowly and thoughtfully, to the first page again. The grey eyes fastened themselves on the beginning for the second time. "My dearest Althea," were the words they read. Slowly, and with long pauses, during each of which they gazed abstractedly into the yellow mist outside, they followed the three pages of neat, masculine handwriting to the close,

and finally were concentrated with a very thoughtful expression in their depths as they reached the end, where the writer's name was squeezed into the corner. "James L. Meredith" that name was.

Then they were very suddenly lifted, and the girl cast a quick glance round the dining-room, as if to assure herself that she was alone, and then she caught the letter up, and held it close to her face for a moment, so that her cheek rested on the writing. With a quick flush she took it away again, and once more glanced hurriedly about her, to find herself still alone. The flush faded, and the grey eyes settled themselves back into the same steady gaze at the mist; a gaze that seemed to say that the brain behind them was in perplexity, or indecision, or doubt, or all three.

Althea Godfrey's actual position in the dim dining-room on this April morning was oddly typical of her position in the world; for, as she was actually alone, so was she practically alone in life.

She had been born in India, and before she was five years old she had experienced more travelling than falls to an English-born child's lot in three times as many years. Her father's regiment had been moved from one station to another, and he had been appointed to different commands many times before he settled down with the prospect of some years' quiet before him. This quiet he and his young wife turned at once to account by making the preparations that both had long known were imminent, for sending their only child away. Mrs. Godfrey was to take the little Althea to her married sister in England. The day was fixed, their passage had been taken, and all arrangements made, when a sudden outbreak of cholera attacked the station. On the day on which the steamer sailed both father and mother were lying in their graves, and the tiny, frightened child was crying bitterly because she had called them so long, and they would not come back. Stranger hands comforted the child, took care of it during the beginning of its lonely life, and a few months later brought it to the aunt who had been expecting it.

Lady Carruthers was considerably older than her dead sister, Mrs. Godfrey. She was a well-meaning, kind-hearted woman, and thoroughly determined to do her duty by "poor Althea's little girl." But she had no children of her own, and understood them but little. She was a widow of many years' standing, who had found the

best solace for her widowhood in a large amount of what she called "social intercourse," and more ill-natured people spoke of as "constant gadding about." Consequently, though she was most careful as to the child's material and mental advantages, she did not come much into contact with her niece during the child's growing-up years, and Althea grew up in circumstances of comparative isolation, which early began the development of a naturally clear brain into a decided tendency to think for itself on wholly original lines.

She had for a governess a woman who, trained on the very newest lines, gave the receptive girl plenty of work to do of a sort which aided this process materially. Althea eagerly learned all she was taught, and just as Lady Carruthers was awaking to the consciousness of two facts, namely, that Althea was eighteen, and that she was "inclined to be peculiar," and resolving that her introduction into society should therefore take place without delay, by way of a wholesale corrective, Althea herself presented a request that she might now go to Newnham or Girton at once.

Lady Carruthers gasped. It was late; she had just returned from a dinner-party when this request was preferred. Her first action was decided enough. She sent Althea to bed while she proceeded to think it over. The request had taken her wholly by surprise. After an hour, during which the plan suggested was revolved in her amazed mind from every point of view that mind possessed, she mentally gave in. The girl should go "for a time," she decided.

She was influenced chiefly by two considerations. First, that Althea's personal attractions at this stage were still very undeveloped, and she might have been described simply as a tall, dark girl, with an absorbed expression. Time would improve this, Lady Carruthers thought, and make her more "presentable." And secondly, she knew that it was rather "the thing" to be a clever woman nowadays; and the fact of a little extra learning might give Althea a position in society later, she thought. And, moreover, deep down in her own heart there was a consciousness that she was very thankful for a personal reprieve. She was not one of those women who enjoy a chaperon's position, and the thought of her social duties to Althea had often weighed on her soul a good deal. Money difficulties in the question there

were none. Colonel Godfrey had left what was for his daughter a sufficient, if slender income, and this was, of course, at present devoted to her education.

So the matter was settled, and Althea went to Newnham for "a few months," as Lady Carruthers put it.

The "few months" stretched themselves considerably. Althea came home at the beginning of each vacation so serenely and confidently persuaded that she was, as a matter of course, to return at the end of it, that Lady Carruthers did not even endeavour to gainsay that confidence. Possibly she stood a little in awe both of it and of the manner, a trifle commanding, and more than a trifle assured, which, as she expressed it, "Althea had picked up at Cambridge." And the only demurrer she ventured on was a vague reference now and then to "when you are presented, my dear," or "when you see more of society, Althea," all of which were met by Althea with an impenetrable silence, which might or might not give consent.

Neither the silence nor the commanding manner were wholly characteristic of Althea, however. They were both tempered by qualities both loveable and likeable. Her high spirits were "the life of the house," the servants declared when she left it, and her quiet consideration for her aunt's feelings and wishes was evinced all day long in details. This last fact made the blow which fell upon her at last all the more difficult for Lady Carruthers to realise.

It was soon after Althea's twenty-second birthday that this bolt emerged from the blue. The evening was warm. Althea's birthday was in June, and the vacation having begun, the two were together in Lady Carruthers's drawing-room in Kensington. They were quite alone. The companion whom Lady Carruthers had, some few years back, added to her establishment was accustomed to efface herself, comparatively, during Althea's vacations, partly from tact, and partly because she was somewhat painfully sensible of having little in common with Miss Godfrey.

It was after dinner, and Lady Carruthers, having no engagement for that evening, had settled herself down to enjoyment in a comfortable chair.

Her novel had slipped down on her knees, and she was agreeably conscious of a softening of all her perceptions, when, quite suddenly, Althea, who had been sitting silently in the window, pushed

back her chair, rose, and approached her aunt.

"Aunt Felicia," she said in her full, clear voice, "I feel that I ought to tell you that I have made up my mind about my future. I have been long deliberating, and I have now decided. I mean to be a doctor."

It is absolutely impossible to describe the result of these words. "Aunt Felicia's" mind found the situation so perfectly incomprehensible that it simply refused to take it in, and contented itself with recoiling from it as incredible—for that night.

To all the objections, objurgations, arguments, and expostulations that were launched at her on the next morning and throughout many and many a succeeding day, Althea turned a perfectly deaf ear. She did at first, it is true, enter collectedly and composedly into a discussion with her aunt. But having in the course of it ascertained that Lady Carruthers founded her opposition solely on the principle that it was "so dreadfully unladylike and so horrid" for a woman to become a doctor, she gave up any further argument, and waded unconcernedly through rivers of angry tears on the part of her aunt.

She was not hard-hearted, she was not obstinate, she had simply prepared herself for opposition and braced herself to meet it. She took all the steps necessary to begin her career with quiet determination; and in silence, as far as Lady Carruthers was concerned.

When the latter discovered that nothing she could say or do made any impression on Althea; that she might, in fact, just as profitably dash herself against the rocks at the Land's End in the hope of moving them, as argue with her niece; she rose in her wrath, and exercised what authority was left for her. She declared that Althea, if she was set upon "her own undutiful and unladylike way," should no longer live in her house. With a mixture of ideas at which Althea, in after days, often smiled, she said that she "could not and would not have dissections and skeletons and that sort of thing where she was, to say nothing of the infection it would bring." Althea must find herself a home somewhere else. This Althea quite composedly proceeded to do; she arranged to board in the house of a girl friend who lived in what Lady Carruthers spoke of contemptuously as "some miserable street in Bloomsbury."

Then, on the last night in her old home

Althea had, so to speak, "given the lie" to all her former proceedings by clinging round her aunt's neck as she said good-night, and saying in an odd, broken voice: "You'll forgive me, Aunt Felicia—some day—if I get on well!"

Since then three years had come and gone. They had left Althea where they found her, in a material sense that is to say; for she was still, on this April morning, boarding in the same house for which she had left her aunt's. They were very far from having left her where they found her from a mental point of view.

She had worked hard and well at her chosen profession; she had shrunk from nothing in the way of work, and nothing in the way of experience. And she had displayed in it marked and considerable ability. The steady yet enterprising work of a brain beyond the average told, and quickly brought as a sequence, position and notice. No student of her year had gained either higher distinction or more respect than Althea Godfrey. And perhaps no one was more popular. To be respected is by no means always to be liked. It often involves, on the contrary, being disliked; but Althea, among a set of women whose temperaments and minds were as varying as their faces, who were alike in nothing whatever save in the love of their profession, had won herself a place which was firm and fixed in every heart. And, last, but by no means least, she had won for herself the strongest and warmest affection from the people with whom she lived. Her friend, Lucy Graham, the daughter of the house, had married and left it within a year of Althea's coming to it. And Althea had, as it were, slipped to some extent into her vacant place. For the overworked Mrs. Graham, always struggling with the cares and needs of the family; the girls, whose ages ranged from nineteen down to nine; and the hardworking father and brother, whose daily work in the City had so few breaks in its monotony, Althea made a part of their lives which they would reluctantly have spared.

The life of a house whose income is not more than just sufficient for its needs was very different from that to which Althea had been brought up in her aunt's house. But it was, perhaps, better for her; and, certainly, no life of easy plentifulness would or could have developed Althea's temperament in the same way. And that she was happy in it had been obvious from

the first, obvious even to Lady Carruthers, who exacted from her niece duty visits in which her interest in Althea's surroundings had been curiously inconsistent with her emphatically expressed hatred of her chosen path.

By degrees the duty visits grew more and more frequent in number. Lady Carruthers appeared to be so far mollified by the fact that "Althea looked so well and dressed so nicely," that she insisted on her niece's appearance at whatever social function she herself might be holding. To this, Althea, whenever the occasion in question did not interfere in any way with her work, consented readily enough. And gradually "Lady Carruthers's niece" became rather a feature in Lady Carruthers's entertainments. How the appellation crept into "Lady Carruthers's clever niece," that lady herself best knew.

It was at one of these parties of her aunt's that Althea met the fate which, as one of her fellow-students said, would be "the undoing of all her work."

It was a large dance, and Althea was looking extremely attractive in a new and very pretty gown. When towards the end of it a man was introduced to her as "Dr. Meredith," she gave him only scanty notice at first. She particularly disliked young medical men; they were apt to launch much shallow sarcasm at her profession; a proceeding which made Althea's usually controlled impulsive temper flame up as little else could. This man, however, attracted her attention by completely ignoring the subject of their common profession, and talking to her, as Althea said to herself, "like any other woman." She said it gratefully at first, but as the evening passed and no reference whatever of a personal nature was made by him, she grew aggrieved. Did he think women doctors beneath contempt? she asked herself angrily, in the course of her next morning's lecture. And she found her mind straying from a complicated and delicate bit of dissecting, to an attempt to analyse the expression of Dr. Meredith's eyes. A day or two later she met him again at Lady Carruthers's house, and left it with the same feeling of anger against him; the same unreasoning desire to know what he thought of her. In short, Althea fell in love; fell in love hopelessly and completely, with the man who had thus irritated her. She was very angry with herself; the more so when she found that she could not, as she had

intended to do, tear this despicable weakness from her, and fling it away. More and more against her will, but at the same time better and better, she loved him. And when, some two months after their first meeting, he quite unexpectedly and suddenly proposed to her, Althea said to him that he must give her time, and then went straight home and wrote him the happiest, most perfect acceptance that a proud and maidenly woman could.

This had all happened a year earlier. In the interval Dr. Meredith had left London for a country practice, leaving Althea there, still working steadily. She told her lover that she meant to finish what she had begun, even if her dream of a separate London practice for each of them never became an accomplished fact. But shortly before this April morning she had ended her course, and further, had become fully qualified. There was no immediate prospect of their marriage. Dr. Meredith wished to work up the practice and offer his bride a better income before she became his bride; therefore Althea was looking about her for some temporary work which should fill her time and energies meanwhile.

This was not hard to find. Among the rather small circle of women doctors and their friends, Althea Godfrey's name had, during her course at the school, become well enough known as that of a clever and very promising student, and when the conclusion of her work more than justified her reputation, it quickly became evident to her that more than one channel was open to her energies. She had begun by trying the one that best suited her, and only two days earlier she had made an appointment for an interview with the Superintendent of a Private Nursing Home; an appointment for twelve o'clock on this very morning.

Her destined meeting-place was fully an hour from the house in Bloomsbury, and the little clock on the dining-room mantelpiece was ticking away steadily, and getting well over the ground between the quarter and the half-hour past eleven. Still Althea did not move. She seemed to have forgotten the time, to have forgotten everything to do with her surroundings, for she stood motionless, perfectly motionless, gazing into the mist with the letter in her hand.

A letter from Dr. Meredith was not in itself enough to abstract and absorb her thus. During the months of his absence from London he had written to her with an un-

failing precision that had before now roused the mirth of the Graham family. It was evidently, whether suggested by the letter or not, something in her own thoughts that absorbed her so fully.

The clock chimed the half-hour. Althea neither moved nor heard, and she did not so much as turn her head when the dining-room door was opened and a girl of nineteen looked in.

"Thea!" she said cheerily. "Why, Thea, I thought you were gone out long ago! I sent Jennie to your room with your shoes, as you asked me, nearly an hour ago!"

Althea started, flushed violently, and let her hand fall from the window, all at once.

"I thought you had an appointment, or something," continued the girl, with evident amaze displaying itself on her face.

She was rather pretty in a conventional way. She had bright colouring, and plentiful light-brown hair; all her pretensions to beauty being enhanced by a good-tempered expression.

Althea turned fully round, slowly; a dazed look was slowly fading from her eyes.

"So I had, Bertha!" she responded. "I'm not going to it, though. I think—can Jennie take a telegram for me?"

"Why, of course!"

Bertha Graham answered readily, and then a wondering look came over her face; she came up to Althea, and laid a hand on her wrist.

"Thea," she said, "there's nothing wrong, is there?"

Althea laughed gently; a very reassuring laugh it was, and with it the last traces of the dazed look disappeared.

"Not the least bit!" she answered, putting her one hand, letter and all, on the girl's shoulder. "I'm thinking whether I shall take some work that has offered itself in the country, that's all! Look here, Bertha," she added, "I shan't want Jennie to go out with that telegram. I'll

go myself and see the superintendent, I think, after all. I can do it yet, in a cab. Let her get me a hansom, dear, please. I'll dress while it comes."

Bertha Graham went quietly out of the room, and Althea followed her immediately, dashing, two at a time, up the steps of the staircase, until she reached her own room. Once in her room, she began to dress with characteristic vigour. She laced up her boots without a second's pause, put on her hat, tore down her winter coat from its hook and thrust one arm into it. Then, quite suddenly, she paused, with the coat only half on, and stood leaning against her dressing-table, gazing out into the mist with much the same far-away look that Bertha's entrance had chased from her eyes in the dining-room. The mist was melting fast now; and through it, from her bedroom window, was plainly visible Althea's fast approaching hansom, with Jennie, the little household "odd girl," seated inside.

But Althea did not see either melting mist or approaching hansom. Jennie had had time to stop it, to get out, and to run down the area steps, before Althea moved, with a gesture so sudden as to upset various small trinkets on the table. At the same instant an impulsive light flashed into her eyes, clearing away every shred of doubt or indecision, whichever it was, and leaving them very brilliant with a strange excitement.

"I'll do it!" she said, as she dashed her left arm into its sleeve; "I will!" A further light flashed across her face as she spoke—a certain daringly mischievous light; it lurked in her eyes and the corners of her mouth.

She snatched up her purse, ran down, and was driven off. But not to keep her appointment. She stopped the hansom at a post office; sent a telegram from thence to cancel it, and then told the man to drive to a well-known tailor's shop in Regent Street.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FORTNIGHT later the Bethune household had hardly got over their excitement about Forster's return, although for three days he had been waited on hand and foot by Dora and Adela, and had listened to endless sympathy from his mother about his illness through over-exertion for those "poor dear labouring people."

"It was the climate, mother, not the people," Forster repeated several times, then he quickly dropped the discussion, as he dropped most discussions concerning Africa and his work there.

He was certainly much altered, and was still weak with frequent return of the fever at night; but he declared that he was fast mending, and that the sea voyage had done wonders for him. He should soon be himself again, and would then go back to his work. There had been many enquiries about Philip, and Forster spoke much of his goodness during his own illness, and how well his friend had nursed him.

But though on the face of it everything seemed natural, Dora's keen intuition discovered a flaw. One evening Adela found her in tears, and to see Dora crying was a very bad sign. The sisters were sitting by their boudoir window, which looked out upon the ruins. The June evening was warm and pleasant, and the moon added beauty and mystery to the decay of the past.

"What is the matter, Dolly, dear?" said

Adela. "Has something terrible happened?"

"Yes, it's Forster."

"Forster! Why, he was much better this evening. You are as bad as mother, who says——"

"No, it's not that; but oh, Adela, he is so much changed."

"Changed! Yes, he is thinner and paler, and not very talkative; but he is still weak."

"I don't mean that. Forster is altered in himself—I know he is. He has lost his——his——how shall I explain it?"

"His elasticity. I noticed that; but really, Dora, it is only the fever, or the result of it."

"No, it's not fever. You know three years ago he was much worse than he is now, but it was just then that he—he taught me so much."

"But you were so young then. You don't need all Forster's ideas now; you have enough of your own."

"But, Adela, he has lost his enthusiasm. Where is it gone to? Only last year, when we first went abroad, you know he had it; it was there. He cared just as much about those young men as he did about us. I can't bear to see Forster so much changed."

"Really, Dolly, you exaggerate. Forster is very much disappointed at having to leave the work and his friend. He must be worrying about that."

"He doesn't even speak of Philip Winskell as he did formerly. They seemed like brothers then, now——Adela, I can't help thinking they have quarrelled, or that they are not the friends they were formerly."

"I can only say I heard him tell mother how Philip Winskell sat up with him night

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after night, and nursed him as if he were a child. I'm sure you are wrong."

Dora gradually left off crying. She was now a little ashamed of herself.

"I know it's silly, but Forster has always been my conscience. If he should leave off caring about his work, I should feel as if——"

"As if what?"

"As if the world were coming to an end."

"Mother would be delighted. I know in her heart she does not appreciate Forster's object in life. She would much rather he married. By the way, the De Lucys have arrived. Ida De Lucy looked more lovely than ever as she flitted about the garden this evening. She called out to me to tell me that it was like being in fairyland, and that she hoped you would soon come and see her. She must be about your own age, Dora."

"But her brother might be there. He is so obstinate and disagreeable, and I don't seem to care about anybody as long as Forster is like this. Adela, he is changed."

Adela was not imaginative enough to see the change, so Dora said no more. Where was the use? But the next day, while she was sitting with her brother, the feeling came back to her with greater certainty than before.

It was a beautiful evening, and Forster was lying down on a couch drawn up close to the open window. Mrs. Bethune and Adela had gone to a garden-party. Mary was in a turret chamber with her violin, and Dora had volunteered to stay with her brother, though he declared he wanted nothing. The girl was copying some music for her sister, but every now and then she glanced at Forster, and noticed that he was not reading.

She suddenly rose and came to sit by his side.

"You feel worse than you will own, Forster. I'm sure of it. That stupid doctor——"

Forster was changed. He looked thin and gaunt, for the fever had left its mark upon him. He smiled at Dora's outburst.

"No, I am much better, Dr. Crane says so. By the way, Dora, you have changed since I left last year. You have become a woman. You were a child when I left you."

"Well, you see, it was time one of the family grew up. We don't seem to be quite like other people—as a family, I mean."

"Is that your opinion? Why do you say so?" said Forster, smiling.

"I can't help thinking so, now I am older. You, Forster—well, you are unlike other men—Mr. De Lucy, for instance; he spends his time in amusing himself. You never did that; only somehow you have lost your old enthusiasm. It's this horrid African fever, I suppose, which is the cause of it."

"I suppose it is. Directly I can get back what you call the old enthusiasm, I must return and release Philip. He must come back."

"Why didn't he come with you?"

"I could not persuade him to do so. He thought the work would suffer. But it was my work, Dora—mine. I ought not to have let him in for it."

"He went of his own free will. You would never persuade any one to do wrong."

"Hush, Dora, don't talk nonsense. I'm no better than other men."

"But you are, Forster, dear, ever so much better. I want you to—to—— Oh, I don't know what I want; I want you to be yourself again."

"What do you say to coming with me, Dora, to see that queer old Palace where the Princess is buried? I ought to go and see her."

"Why ought you? She has not been very sympathetic about you. I wish I could understand the Princess."

"Understand her! She is a noble woman."

"You did not think so always, Forster."

"I did not understand her. Look how disinterested she was. I feel as if I—I—— Shall we go?"

"Will it do you good, Forster?"

"Yes, it will cure me, I think."

"Then let's go; we must have the doctor's leave. Oh! it will be delightful going with you. How long shall we be away?"

"I must get a month's change of air. After that I shall be quite myself again, I know I shall, and I can go back and finish the work. Jack will be rewarded if it is a real success."

Forster's eyes brightened, and Dora was satisfied. He would be himself again when he was well.

"You must write to Mrs. Winskell and ask her if she will have us," said Forster, after a pause.

"But haven't you yet written to her about her husband?"

"No; I left that to Philip. I meant to go and see her as soon as I could."

When the others came home Dora was eager with her news. Forster felt that change of air would set him up, and the Princess would certainly be delighted to see them.

No one made any objection, except Mrs. Bethune, who thought that Forster could not be nursed among those poor dear, odd, wild people, but Dora's presence was to secure Forster from being killed through neglect, and the letter was written. Dora noticed that Forster was very restless for the next few days, and several times asked her if she had heard from the Princess. The answer came after a short delay:

"MY DEAR DORA,—I am very glad you propose coming to see my dear old home. It is perfect now. The glen is in its beauty, and the Rothery is still quite noisy in spite of the dry weather. I was sorry to hear your brother was invalided home. I hope this northern air will do him good. My father is no better, he certainly gets more feeble, but my uncle is in excellent health and spirits. The Palace is at last complete, and everything has been done to his satisfaction. He will be delighted to rattle down the many miles of pass and to do the honours of it.—Your sincere friend,
PENELOPE WINSKELL."

The note was handed round and Forster kept it. He said he would answer it, but Dora had to arrange for the journey, and she found out that Forster had forgotten all about answering Penelope's letter.

In the meanwhile, Arthur De Lucy and his sister came very often to the Castle. They seemed to make themselves quickly at home, and, indeed, no one could be long with the Bethunes without doing so. The house door was always open. Any one who dropped in was expected to stay to the next meal, whatever it might be, and, except Mr. Bethune's study, the whole house was made free to the world. It was natural to collect round Forster's couch, and Arthur De Lucy seemed especially contented to sit there and quarrel with Dora. Forster looked on and smiled, and put in a gentle deprecating remark when words ran high, for Dora refused to be crushed. The discussion usually ended with an aphorism on Arthur's part, and a game of tennis with Dora, Ida, and Adela to make up.

Every one took to the handsome, lazy

minor poet, except Dora, who could not forgive his utter disbelief in any good resulting from Forster's work. Quite unexpectedly, Lord and Lady Rookwood came down from London for a few days' country air, and to see Forster. It seemed dreadful now to Dora to have two foes instead of one. Lord Rookwood sided with the minor poet, in spite of all the substantial aid he had given to his cousin Forster. Dora only fought the more bravely, and a very merry party was the result. But Jack Rookwood remarked:

"Well, I think this time you are hard hit, Forster. You are certainly not the same man that you were. I hope you will give up all that farce, and settle down in England like a sensible fellow."

The two cousins were alone, and Forster was a little off his guard as he answered somewhat absently:

"I shall go back as soon as I am strong enough. We are getting on splendidly at Rookwood. Indeed, Jack, you ought to be proud of your settlement. It will bring you more fame than anything else your lordship will ever accomplish."

"If it proves your mausoleum; and what will my aunt say? By the way, what does Philip Winskell mean by his long absence? His was rather a strange sort of marriage, wasn't it?"

"I don't know. Philip is utterly changed. Don't say anything about it, but we had words on the subject. He has behaved awfully badly to his wife. Just as I said something must be done, I fell ill, and my lips were closed because Philip nursed me day and night."

"Well, that must be between him and the proud Princess! I confess I never understood the business. They say in town she married Philip for his money."

"Don't say a word against her. You know that Dora and I are going there next week."

"Better come to Scotland with us."

"No, thanks; Dora has always promised to visit the Princess. She took a great liking to her. It will do me good, too, for the place is loneliness itself."

"Humph! It's all queer. I advise you to leave that business alone. So Philip Winskell still stays at Rookwood?"

"He said it was fatal to leave it, and, of course, he was partly right and partly wrong. I think if we leave the men to themselves a little while, we shall see how they can walk alone. I told him so, and he allowed the truth of my arguments. He

promised that if it were necessary he would come back."

"I should advise his returning as soon as possible. People will talk if——"

"Don't mention public opinion! You know it has never had any weight with me."

"That's true. Hulloa, look at Dora and the minor poet. What a pity they can't——"

"Dora hates him. They are always quarrelling."

"The sister is the prettiest little girl I've seen this season."

"Yes, pretty, but insipid. Her brother thinks that the right thing for a woman."

"The poet is a little behind the times."

"Or else in advance."

"Perhaps so. The next generation will cultivate themselves carefully, and will take more pains to preserve their beauty than the modern girl does. There's Dora in the sun without a hat. She cares no more for her complexion than if she were a Hottentot."

Forster looked idly out of the window, then he sank back again into his arm-chair.

"She is wrong, however. A beautiful woman has more power than—than anything else on earth, Jack."

"Not in your case. I should say a gutter boy would more easily win your sympathy. There's my wife beckoning to me. She is evidently unable to keep the peace between Dora and that poet."

Lord Rookwood strode out laughing. His wonderful good temper and his sense of fun made him a guest who was always sure of finding a welcome.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE carriage stood at the door, but no one was down early enough to see the travellers go off except Adela. Just as she was pouring out the coffee for Forster and his sister, they heard footsteps on the gravel.

"Why, it's Mr. De Lucy," she exclaimed.

"That's too bad," said Dora, blushing with righteous indignation. "What has he come for? It's rather cool to come so early. It is only half-past seven."

Whether, cool or not, the minor poet entered the dining-room.

"Good morning. I've come to breakfast with you. I'm usually up early, or at least I wake early, so I thought I had better see the last of you."

"We certainly are surprised at your early arrival," said Dora, jumping up to cut herself some ham at the side-table.

"Won't you let me do it?" said Arthur. "You know, Miss Dora, that I like repose in a woman."

"Yes, of course I know that; you have said it often enough. But the sight of you makes me feel doubly energetic."

"I have a bad influence over you, I see."

He took a chair and sat down, resolutely disregarding Dora's movements.

"Forster has really made up his mind to travel," said Adela, coming to the rescue.

"The inducement to travel must be strong," said Arthur, in his usual drawling tone.

Forster rose and went to the side-board.

"I want to get well. Dora, sit down, and don't hack the ham in this fashion. De Lucy, will you have some?"

"Not the piece hacked by Miss Dora, please. I know she has no sense of art relative to a slice of ham."

"Hers is a rustic appetite."

Dora ate in silence, feeling very indignant with the poet. She wanted to tell Adela a hundred things which must be done in her absence, but which she did not much want to do in De Lucy's presence.

"Adela, here is the key of the tin money box which contains the boys' cricket money. This is the padlock of the library books. This is the key of my private drawer. There are some violin strings in it if Mary wants some, and here is the list of those garden-parties which mother has said it would give her much pleasure to accept."

"Yes, dear," said Adela a little shyly, for she was conscious of Mr. De Lucy's attentive gaze. "I won't lose them; I quite understand."

"That's not all," continued Dora. "Betty Duke must be paid her half-a-crown weekly; don't forget, because she feels so injured if one does not remember. Then Dummy Dan must come and help to weed the paths. He never gets many weeds out, but don't tell father, only give him sixpence for doing it."

"I had better write it down," said Adela.

"No, you can remember. Dan must pick up the tennis balls the days Mr. De Lucy plays, because he sends them into the bushes, and he is too lazy to pick them up; but that will come into the sixpence."

"I'm listening, Miss Dora, and feel highly flattered that you are thinking of my needs in your absence."

"The balls get spoilt if they stay out in the rain," said Dora. "There is something else, but I can't quite remember just now."

"I hope Miss Bethune will be let off the rest," said Arthur solemnly.

"Now I can't talk any more. I must eat as much as possible, as we have so little time for meals on the way north."

And as good as her word, Dora began eating in earnest.

"Women should live on honey and wafers," said Arthur; "but I see you have not brought your sister up on such fairy food."

Forster laughed, but he soon plunged into a conversation with the poet about the best way of keeping Polish Jews from cheapening labour. Arthur could talk extremely well when he was not too lazy.

When the carriage came to the door De Lucy announced he was coming to the station with them, as he always enjoyed a morning drive, and in spite of Dora's look of disgust she had to put up with his company. However, as the poet still continued his conversation with Forster, she had no more occasion to quarrel with him.

"Good-bye," he said as she jumped into the railway carriage, "I hope you won't mind telling us all about the Princess, Miss Dora. She is my ideal woman; or she was when she sat doing nothing."

"I shall go out shooting, I hope, in the glen and on the mountain-side," were Dora's last words, and then De Lucy saw her no more.

He looked after the train some time before he sauntered home, and returned to breakfast with his own sister, to whom, however, he did not reveal his early morning doings.

"Now, Forster, I have got you to myself," exclaimed Dora. "We shall be happy. It is a long time since we have had a holiday. I wonder what the Palace will be like, and if the Princess is changed! I am glad you wanted to go, as I have always longed to see that romantic glen. Do you remember how Philip used to rave about it?"

"Yes, he used to do so. I believe he does not like it now. I think, Dora, if you are not tired, we will go straight on to Rothery. We can just get there by night-fall."

"It will tire you too much," said Dora, wondering at Forster's remark; then when

he disclaimed, a little impatiently, any idea of over-fatigue, she said no more.

"Forster is changed, quite changed," she meditated. "He is ill, or there is something on his mind. Has it anything to do with Philip?"

As she could not settle this question she gave herself up to the pleasure of travelling, and tried to think of something else. Her girlhood had been full of joy, no cloud had risen on her clear horizon, but the mystery of life was beginning to arouse her dormant imagination. Sooner or later every soul is faced by this impenetrable wall of mystery. Why have human beings been placed in the world? What is their highest duty? And for what ultimate purpose are they designed?

A life of active work for others had been Dora's ordinary outlook, but she had taken this so much as a matter of course, that deeper difficulties were only just now dawning upon her. She had been accustomed to lean on Forster's opinion, and this had been her conscience, but now that her prop seemed suddenly to fall her, the certainty of life disappeared.

She could not explain all this to herself, for it was all vague and confused, but this it was which had planted a new element of doubt in her mind.

Forster was very weary before they entered the carriage which was to convey them to the Palace. It was a long drive. The moonlight happily was brilliant, and enabled them to pass safely over the steep pass and to rattle down the many miles of descent into the lonely glen. When they reached the head of the lake they had still a short distance to drive, and Dora was only too thankful when Forster at last roused himself to say:

"We are turning into the drive, Dora. I can hear the voices of the distant Rothery."

"I am afraid you are dreadfully tired, Forster."

"Only rather tired."

Then he sank back and drank in the beauty of the scene, but with the beauty came back the vision of the woman whose image had so often haunted him. He remembered the last sight of her so well. It had haunted him during his weeks of illness, and for her sake he had upbraided Philip, and had quarrelled with his best friend. He had not recognised it at parting, but now he had found out the secret. He knew he could say nothing—must say nothing—to her, but all these months he

had had one wish, which was going to be realised. He must see her once more. He had raged at the thought that she was Philip's wife, and that Philip was beside him, calmly working with the best of them, indeed, working better than the best of the little band of settlers. He had hated himself for feeling angry with his friend, because he could live without seeming to remember Penelope, but when he tried to remonstrate, some invisible ghost seemed to rise up between him and Philip. His motive was not free from a feeling he dared not own, and dared not analyse. Now he thought of that last interview with Penelope, how intensely happy the remembrance had made him, but still he felt lowered in his own estimation for wishing to come here. Last time he had said some things which he had no right to say, and his excuse had been that he should never see her again; but how was it that he was here once more, that he was going to see her, and that Philip was far away working on the lonely settlement—working and waiting for Forster's return?

Forster felt like Dora, though with very different motives—that he was only now beginning to live, and to understand what was meant by the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. It had never come to him before, and he rebelled against the trial now it had burst upon him almost unawares. He felt like a lonely traveller overtaken by a violent storm, of which no barometer had warned him. Was it his fault that he was unprepared?

Forster had so long been a leader of others, he had, without conscious conceit, so naturally directed the souls of other men, making excuses for failings, that he had never imagined himself in their place. He had despised the sins which had surrounded him, because he had no temptation to fall into like errors; but now—now! with one more silencing of his conscience, Forster replied to the silent voice:

"I cannot do otherwise. I must see her—I must see her once more!"

He not only felt this, but he was conscious of the failure of his will-power to resist. Psychological problems surround us in far greater numbers than we realise. The attractive power one human being may possess over another is a well-recognised fact, but this power may be put forth, as it were, quite suddenly, without visible reason, and when least expected. Some being, who for months, years perhaps, has been quite powerless to

attract us, may suddenly appear in another light. The strength to resist is there certainly, but before this is recognised, and the will brought to bear, the moment of resistance may be over, and the way to ruin may be only too easy and too sure.

But Forster had not yielded without a fight. Dora's presence, he said, was his safeguard. With this innocent, high-minded child with him, how could he be led into saying words which he would afterwards regret? His refrain was:

"I only want to see her. I want to be sure that Philip is unworthy of her."

The old-fashioned carriage swept round the drive, and suddenly they were at the Palace door.

Dora looked at the picturesque pile of building and was enchanted.

"Forster, here we are! What a beautiful house! How romantic it all is! And look, there is the Princess herself."

The front door had been thrown open by the menservants; the light from the central hall made a halo behind and around her. She might have been a Hebe rising from some mysterious sea of shadow into an equally mysterious light.

Dora, innocent of all ideas save the present enjoyment and her fears for Forster's health, was very happy. She ran up the steps, and was delighted by seeing no change at all in the beauty of the Princess. Indeed, she had more colour than formerly, and much less haughtiness of bearing.

"Dora, I'm glad to see you at last. Are you tired, dear?" The voice was quite gentle. "And how is your brother?"

"Here he is; dreadfully tired, of course, but he will not own it."

"You shall go to your rooms at once. I have given you the turret chambers, and the sitting-room there is at your disposal. Come and see it, for your dinner is there."

She had addressed all this to Dora, but at the same time she felt that Forster was grasping her hand. Then she opened a door and called her uncle. The Duke had just finished his dinner, and now hurried forward.

He looked younger, happier, indeed radiant. He had all that his heart could desire now in the way of state and luxury. That was apparent everywhere, and to Forster, who had known the Palace in its days of decay, it seemed like a fairy habitation, and quite a fitting casket for the person of the Princess.

"Welcome to Rothery," said the Duke warmly, and with the exquisite courtesy of manner which was natural to him. "So you have at last found your way to this secluded spot."

"Oh, we live in seclusion also," answered Dora. "I love the country. How beautiful it all looks in the moonlight! I feel inclined to run out and explore the glen."

Forster was really tired, too weary and too inwardly agitated to say anything, and after a few words he retired to rest.

Dora was not to be persuaded to follow his example. She insisted on visiting some of the old rooms, especially the ghost chamber; then at last she too retired to rest, and Penelope wished her uncle good night.

When she was alone the Princess knelt down by the open window, and looked out into the still moonlight. It was unusually warm and still. No bird was singing. She had thought of Forster very often on lonely evenings, and she had wondered whether he were thinking of her. She had rebelled against the remembrance of Philip that would intrude, and she had tried to persuade herself that law cannot bind affections. Now he was here under her roof.

She must not allow him to guess her secret, but she would be happy for a little while. She could look at him and feel that—that—no, she must not feel thus. Then, rising, she impatiently shut the window and went to bed, and night reigned in the glen.

SUCCESS.

SUCCESS is, not seldom, so much like failure, as to make it difficult to distinguish the one from the other. The words become, practically, synonyms. The man whose success is envied by the unthinking crowd, is, only too frequently, himself aware that he is a failure. He knows that his whole life has been a failure; that, in none of the things which he set himself to do, has he succeeded; and yet his career is held up for admiration among the careers of other of those heroes of the popular imagination—successful men.

What constitutes success? The making of money? Not necessarily. The popular acceptance of the notion that money means success is productive of an inconceivable amount of pain, disappointment, misery. As a matter of plain fact, there is no necessary connection whatever between

money and success. A man may make, as they phrase it, millions, and yet may live and die an unsuccessful man. How often has a young man started in life dreaming the dreams which are youth's best heritage, and gone on adding money to money, to find that with each fresh addition another of his dreams has vanished, until he becomes soured, splenetic, solitary—and a millionaire. Can the life of such an one be correctly described as successful?

The man who can carry his illusions with him to the grave, surely he is one type of true success. Consider what it means. Such an one, much more than the proverbial poet, must be born, not made. He must have a truly singular disposition. His must be that precious gift of the gods—the capacity for always seeing things on their brightest sides. There must be a silver lining to his every cloud, and the silver lining must be the only part of the cloud which he can see. (He must be of a gay and of a continual courage. He must never be cast down, and nothing must ever still the laughter which is in his heart. One must wish, sometimes, that oneself were such an one. For this man must always walk in fairyland, in that world of wonders where whatever is is best. With what material fortune will he meet? It is hard to say. For one perceives that in one faculty he must be lacking—in the faculty of differentiation. If good and evil fortune are alike to him, surely he will not go out of his way to strive for good. Why should he? There will be no difference between the one and the other to him. One suspects that, at best, such an one would be a philosophic vagabond, a constitutionally light-hearted, don't care sort of fellow, who would come into the world with nothing, and who would go out of it with almost as little. Yet, though his last resting-place were a pauper's grave, who can doubt that, from his own particular point of view, his career would be an illustration of one type of true success? How many of us, who, in the colloquial sense, are successful, might change places with him to our own advantage!

As our experience widens, the conviction is apt to force itself upon us that success is like that creak of gold, which, in our childhood, they used to tell us we should find buried at the end of the rainbow. Just as the end of the rainbow is never reached, so the farther we advance the farther success recedes. As age begins to press upon us, and we become wearied, we con-

clude that it is an illusion, like the mirage of the desert, and nothing more. Who shall be the judge of a successful man, the man himself or the looker-on? A man may be successful in one thing, but who has been successful in all things? And if a man has not been successful in all things, can he be said to be really successful in one?

Even if one's desires are small ones, and, apparently, well within one's grasp, one cannot rely upon being able to achieve success. Jones declares that if he wins Miss Brown, and five hundred a year with which to keep her, he will have achieved success. He wins the five hundred, the lady becomes Mrs. Jones, and, very shortly, he is found exclaiming that he wishes that she had remained Miss Brown. Has he succeeded, or has he failed? Or all goes well with Jones, but he has no child; without a child he feels that his life, his home, is empty. Again, is it success or failure? Or, his prayers are answered, Jones has a child; and the child proves to be a thorn in Jones's flesh. Can the man whose child makes him unhappy, and, perhaps, spoils his whole life, be said to have succeeded?

You perceive that it is, in a great measure, the old story of the vanity of human wishes. And one perceives another thing—that success is, in general, an affair of the moment, a transitory thing, here to-day and gone to-morrow. One wins on this card, one loses on the next. It is a tale of varying fortune. Success seldom stays with one person for long.

Success is obviously a question of comparison. What is success to one man, to another is nothing, and less than nothing. I remember the almost delirious delight with which a friend received the news that success had attended his efforts to obtain a small post on a journal of more than dubious stability. He had a wife and children. The thing meant food for them for, at any rate, some weeks to come. And I remember the indifference with which another friend received the intimation that he had succeeded, unexpectedly, to a large inheritance. He was already well-to-do; he was a bachelor; his habits were fixed; he regarded this new addition to his responsibilities as something very like a bore. Not only is success a question of comparison—it is a great deal to Jones if he wins five pounds, while it is nothing to Rothschild if he wins five thousand—it is also a question of temperament, of taste.

I once encountered an acquaintance who had just been left a fortune by a distant relative. I proceeded to offer my congratulations. To my surprise he took them all awry. He was in quite a rage. He seemed to think I was insulting him. I wondered if my information had been wrong. Not a bit of it. The dream of his life was to be an artist—indeed, he believed himself to be one already. The same post which had brought the news of the fortune had also brought him something else—an intimation that the canvas in which, as he fancied, he had put his whole heart, his noblest aspirations, his finest workmanship, had been rejected by the hanging committee of the Royal Academy. He is one of those unfortunate persons—surely the most unfortunate folk on earth!—who mistake the desire to be for the power to be. He still paints; he still sends his pictures to the Academy; they are still refused. Not improbably he would count his fortune well lost if he could only succeed, on his merits, in being hung on the line.

We are frequently told that if success only comes at last, its arrival blots out the memory of a long line of failures. In a degree this is true; but only in a degree. Success does make a difference. The man who has sent six books into the world, which have all been failures, and who makes a huge success with his seventh, may regard as a joke the failure of his previous six. He occasionally does—by no means always. The man who, having failed in five professions, succeeds in his sixth, may treat his five experiences as material for laughter. It depends. That success can and does come too late is a truism, which the inculcators of the doctrine of "Self-Help" are continually neglecting. And yet the thing is certain. There comes a time in the lives of many men in which success is a matter of practical indifference. Indeed, worse, when the advent of success adds to their already overflowing cup of bitterness the element of irony. One can pay too dearly for everything; one is continually paying too dearly for success.

Such a case as the following is by no means an uncommon one. A man, in his early youth, thought out and perfected an improvement in—no matter what. The improvement had nothing to do with his own trade, but it continually occupied his thoughts, and in season and out of season he spoke of it to whoever would listen. But, so far as practical result

were concerned, no one could be induced to listen. The man was an expert at his trade, but as time went on the demand for experts at that particular trade decreased until now, for some years, to all intents and purposes, there has been no demand for them at all. Without work, or at longer and longer intervals, with work which was more and more poorly paid, with no one to help him realise the dream of his life, and to listen to his recipe for the making of a fortune, he began to console himself with drink. He became an habitual drunkard. His home was broken up; his wife and daughters were obliged to leave him in self-defence. His daughters have long since had homes of their own. And at last, after more than thirty years of waiting—and such a thirty years!—he has found a listener. His idea is being acted on. It promises to succeed even beyond the man's own expectations. But, so far as he is concerned, success has come too late. What use is it to him? He is a friendless, wifeless, childless tippler. He can get all he wants for a pound or thirty shillings a week. Set him beside a pint pot, he is happy; success will only mean a multiplication of the pint pots. If it had even come after only fifteen years of waiting! Now no measure of success will compensate him for the past; far less will it obliterate it. Nothing now will make him what once he might have been. Success to him at this time of day is worthless; it has come, as it comes to many a man, too late.

The man who, in the face of long-continued ill-success, can keep himself pure and unspotted by the world, who, as the servants say, can keep his character, is a rare quantity indeed. Success, we are told, tries a man. So it does. Perpetual failure tries him even more. It tries him in every possible way in which a man can be tried. It tries his courage. It requires the courage of a hero to enable a man, beaten again, and again, and again, to advance with undaunted front towards still another series of defeats. Few things take so much out of a man as a thrashing. If the thrashing is repeated perhaps a hundred times, what then? Continual failure tries a man's judgement. No severer test, indeed, could be applied. The old rhyme has it, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Yes, but how often is the trial to be repeated?

Perseverance is commendable—in theory, but not always, by any means, in practice.

Multitudes of men would have succeeded in one walk of life if they had not persisted in persevering in another. When to give up, when to own that one's quest is hopeless, when to acknowledge that one is beaten—this is a matter which requires the exercise of the nicest judgement. It is one with which the continually unsuccessful man is sure to be confronted. Oft-repeated failure tries, what may be called, a man's sanity of vision. The temptation is almost irresistible to belittle the men who have succeeded where he has failed; to look at them with jaundiced eyes. His own failure is perilously apt to affect the clearness of his outlook. Is it not notorious that the average pessimist is an unsuccessful man? To him the whole scheme of creation, the whole world, and all that it contains, is a failure—because he himself has failed.

But in nothing, probably, does continual failure so try a man as in the matter of his own personal self-respect. For the successful man, nothing is easier than to be honest; for the unsuccessful man, nothing is harder. This does not apply only to honesty in the legal sense, though you will find, if the records of our criminals be examined—it is written here with no ironical intention!—that, almost universally, they are unsuccessful men. Failure, marking them for its own, has driven them along the paths of the fraudulent. But one can be dishonest, both to oneself and to others, without being criminal. There are a thousand petty tricks and methods of procedure, which in their essence are dishonest, which continually assail the man who fails; which continually offer themselves to him, on every hand, in the guise of friends and of assistants. Failure is, primarily, the secret cause of drunkenness, all the world over. No more insidious temptation comes to the unsuccessful man—comes to him, too, in the guise of a friend—than alcohol. The average man has not much backbone; when failure takes from him the little which he has, the result is collapse. In his helplessness, he almost invariably turns for relief to the anæsthesia of drink.

There is still another furnace of flaming fire in which the man who is a failure as of course is tried. Such an one, in a sense in which we, all of us, may well pray to be delivered, is alone. To begin with, such an one, necessarily, shrinks from his fellows. There is a feeling of humiliation which is inseparable from constant failure,

and from which no man can be free. The probability is that the better the man, the more surely will this feeling of humiliation drive him from the company of his fellows. The invertebrate creature, being, possibly, pachydermatous—nature has its compensations!—when he fails, is wont to begin at once to sponge. The finer animal avoids its fellows lest he should seem to sponge. Whether they are vertebrate or invertebrate, the position of men who are failures, in the end, in this respect, is the same—they are alone. It may be a hard saying, but it is a true one—the man whose life, from any cause whatever, has been a failure, is absolutely friendless. He has friends neither of his own house—if he has one—nor of anybody else's. He is a marked man—a mark for contempt and scorn. He is like a wounded man, into whose wounds an irritant is always being rubbed, for the sake of keeping them open. If his final resting-stage is not the work-house, it is not unlikely that he is made to wish it were.

To every question there are two sides, and though it certainly is a fact that nothing tries a man like long-continued failure, on the other hand, the successful man undoubtedly has to stand his trial, too. And, equally undoubtedly, a sharp trial it often is, and not seldom is the verdict, which his own conduct constrains us to return, anything but in his favour.

One reason why this is so is obvious—it is because success so frequently comes only after a course of failure. Failure is very far from being what some folks would have us believe it is—necessarily, a school for the successful. To carry oneself as a King, one must be born a King—that is, one must be habituated to the atmosphere in which a King lives, and moves, and has his being; just as to bear success successfully one should be born successful. In the days of the original Grub Street, we are given to understand that authors were curious cattle; because the material side of their lives was an uncertain side; because, when, after starving for twelve months, they found themselves seated at what, to them, was a feast, they were not in a condition, either mentally or physically, to conduct themselves in the fashion of men who were accustomed to feast every day of their lives. When a man, who has been practically a pauper for years, suddenly finds himself in possession of a considerable sum in ready cash, it is almost inevitable that he will not use it to the

best advantage. The school in which he has been trained has not taught him how to do so. He is almost sure to either hoard or squander it.

A great deal of cheap abuse is thrown at the men who are said, in the days of their success, to forget the friends of the days of their struggle. It is well, in such cases, to make quite sure that the case is proved. When Jackson, who is still struggling, complains bitterly of the conduct of his whilom friend, Johnson, who has arrived, it is more than likely that, on enquiry, you will find that the fault is at least as much Jackson's as Johnson's. Jackson tells you that Johnson scarcely condescends to recognise him when he meets him in the street; but he does not tell you that he has gone out of his way to give Johnson to understand that he—Jackson—considers that Johnson has usurped the position which he—Jackson—ought to hold. One's friends are frequently very candid critics. They tell Johnson that he never will succeed, and then, when he does succeed in spite of them, they expect to share the fruits of his success. Whatever share he may accord them, the betting is that they are dissatisfied, though, as a matter of strict right, they have no claim even to his recognition. It is certain that, if he had failed, they would have turned their backs on him, pointing their fingers, and crying, "I told you so!"

It is curious, when a man shows signs of being likely to make a great and an exceptional success, how a sort of tail begins to attach itself to him, with or without his leave, and that this tail expects, and considers itself entitled to expect, that his success will be also theirs. An actor, who has been a comparative if not a complete failure, was denouncing, in very bitter terms, the behaviour towards himself of another actor whose success had been phenomenal. Some of the words he used illustrate the peculiar point of view of such a tail. "I made a point of getting an engagement wherever he got an engagement. I never let slip a chance of acting with him when I could. And now that he has a theatre of his own, not only has he never offered me a shop, but he scarcely seems to know me when we meet." This gentleman had a lively prescience of the other's future; he intended to float to popularity on the stream of the other's good fortune, and because the other declined to bear him with him he reviled. I heard the point more comically and more

forcibly illustrated by a man who is an "operator" in the City. "I give you my word that whenever Larkins had a good thing on I always went in with him, I always backed his luck. Where he led I always followed, and now that he's a millionaire twice told he don't even ask me to his house to dinner."

That is a curious moment in which a man, who hitherto has been a failure, suddenly awakes to the fact that he has achieved success—a great success—at last. None, except those who have experienced it, know what a difference there is between having money in your pocket and having none. You begin to feel the pangs of hunger directly you have not a penny left with which to buy a loaf, and there is something you want in every shop you pass. So long as you have even only a few shillings remaining you are, comparatively, a King among men; but with the passing of the shillings there seems to pass something from your stature too. You become, and you feel you have become, so small a thing. When the man who for a considerable period of time has fluctuated between the possession of a few shillings and the possession of none at all suddenly finds himself in the position of the dazzlingly successful, is it strange if he loses his head, and with it his balance too? He has become, from much voyaging, a skilled navigator in the Sea of the Penniless People; he is not even yet in possession of a chart of the Sea of the Rarely Rich, so he flounders on the sand-banks and runs against the rocks.

I have sometimes wondered what I should do if I passed unexpectedly from the enjoyment of some forty pounds a year to the enjoyment of some four thousand, or—just by way of making the thing complete—forty thousand pounds a year. Should I go off my head? I should not be by any means surprised. Certainly the one thing would not be more surprising than the other. Dear me! what should I do if I held the lottery ticket which won the prize of half a million? If I thrust my spade into the piece of virgin ground which turned out to be something very like solid gold, should I go stark mad?

I once heard of a young man, a "junior" clerk in the City, who obtained—from what source, I believe, was never made clear—"information." On the strength of this "information" he succeeded in persuading certain confiding brokers to purchase for him "a large line" in a particular company's shares. For once in a way the in-

formation turned out to be all right, and in the course of a single day the youngster—he was not much more than twenty-one—netted over a hundred thousand pounds. The thing affected him as, I fear, at his age such an accident might not improbably have affected me. The young gentleman went tearing off, there and then, as hard as he could tear, towards those proverbial quadrupeds the dogs. By now he has probably reached them. The thing happened some five years back. For over a twelvemonth he has been the inmate of an asylum for pauper lunatics. He was ruined by his success.

Well, one thing is sure and certain, the same hideous peril is not likely to threaten many of us. I feel a certain confidence that it is not likely to threaten me. So let us be thankful. It is indeed cause for thankfulness that our brains are not likely to be overturned by the overwhelming torrent of success which Dame Fortune precipitates in our direction. Ours is, for the most part, a surer hope. We are surely, and, one might add, safely anchored—is it not safely anchored?—to the ironbound coasts of failure. Failure in the positive, comparative, and superlative degrees.

Hence these tears!

IDENTIFICATION BY FINGER-MARKS.

A BLUE BOOK recently issued contains the report of the Committee appointed by the Home Secretary to enquire into the best means of identifying habitual criminals. In one section of their report the members of the Committee earnestly recommend finger-prints, as treated by Mr. Galton, as a means that surpasses all others in the directness and the accuracy of the evidence they furnish. Concerning a suspected person and two sets of finger-prints, one procured before suspicion arose and the other subsequently obtained, Mr. Galton has said: "When a minute comparison shows their finger-prints to agree in all or nearly all particulars, the evidence thereby afforded that they were made by the same person far transcends in trustworthiness any other evidence that can ordinarily be obtained, and vastly exceeds all that can be derived from any number of ordinary anthropometric data. 'By itself it is amply sufficient to convict.'" The words quoted appear in italics in Mr. Galton's book.

Though Mr. Galton is identified with the study of finger-prints, he tells us how others had discovered that the ridges on the skin of the bulbs of our fingers and thumbs formed distinct patterns, and that in some minute feature the pattern differed on the fingers of each individual. In a very interesting letter which appeared in "Nature" nearly fourteen years ago, Dr. H. Faulds, then in Tokio, tells how he was led to the study of finger-tips by observing on some ancient pottery in Japan finger-marks that had been made while the clay was soft. He remarked that in some individuals all the fingers of one hand bore a similar arrangement of lines, while the pattern was simply reversed on the other hand. He found that on the fingers of different individuals the patterns were not exactly alike in any two of the cases he examined. The difference may have been in some small particular, but it was not less real, unalterable, and peculiar to the individual on whom it appeared. No natural cause for these differences could be discovered. "Where the loops occur," he says, "the innermost lines may simply break off and end abruptly; they may end in self-returning loops, or, again, they may go on without breaks after turning round upon themselves. Some lines, also, branch or join like junctions in a railway map."

Mr. Galton has made the patterns formed by ridges in the skin the subject of close and systematic study for many years. He tells us that very nearly every pattern can be placed without hesitation under one of the three general heads—arches, loops, and whorls. These classes are named to indicate the prevailing form in the patterns each class includes. "Let no one despise the ridges on account of their smallness," Mr. Galton says, "for they are in some respects the most important of all anthropological data. They form patterns considerable in size and of a curious variety of shape . . . which are little worlds in themselves."

—When a finger, or a finger-print, is closely examined under a lens of only moderate power, it is seen to abound in minute peculiarities. These are caused by the branchings of some of the ridges; the sudden appearance of new ones; the formation of rings, or ovals, like eyelets; and the abrupt stoppage of ridges without any apparent cause.

It is in these countless little peculiarities even more than in the general character of the pattern, that the value of finger-prints

as proof of identity lies. For these appearances, however minute, do not change in the smallest particular during life. A pattern may be traced on the fingers of the babe when born; it will be found the same on those fingers when he has grown to manhood, and may be imprinted from the fingers of the dead without change in the smallest point, though a hundred years should intervene between birth and death. The pattern grows together with the finger. Its proportions vary with fatness or leanness. They may be further affected by wear, gout, or age. But such changes appear in the pattern as a whole; never in the form or correlation of its constituent parts. The pattern may become altered in length or breadth by hard wear of a peculiar kind; but the number of ridges that concur in forming the pattern, their embanchments, their archings, loops, and other minute characteristics, are not subject to change. They are indestructible as the finger.

Sir William J. Herschell was, as far as we can learn, the first to use finger-prints on an extended scale as proofs of identity. Writing, in 1880, a letter printed in "Nature," he gives us some very interesting—but all too short and scanty—notes of his personal experience. He bears testimony to the permanence of the patterns on the bulbs of fingers and thumbs. The finger-print he accepted and required as a signature from those who could not write. He says: "By comparison of the signatures of persons now living with their signatures made twenty years ago, I have proved that that much time at least makes no such material change as to affect the utility of the plan." He had been taking sign-manuals by means of finger-marks for more than twenty years. His purpose was to make attempts at personation—or at repudiation of signatures—quite hopeless, and he declares that his plan was completely effectual wherever it was tried. "It put a summary and absolute stop to the very idea of either personation or repudiation from the moment half-a-dozen men had made their marks and compared them together." Sir William says further: "The ease with which the signature is taken, and the hopelessness of either personation or repudiation are so great, that I sincerely believe the adoption of the practice in places and professions where such kinds of fraud are rife, is a substantial benefit to morality."

The fact that they render personation impossible is conclusive as to the infallibility

of finger-prints as proof of identity. The case of the Tichborne Claimant was much in men's minds when Sir William wrote, and it suggested a striking application of his test. "Supposing," he says, "that there existed such a thing as a finger-print of Roger Tichborne, the whole Orton imposture would have been exposed to the full satisfaction of the jury in a single sitting by requiring Orton to make his own mark for comparison." Dr. Faulds mentions two cases, in one of which finger-prints led to detection of a thief, and in the other to exoneration of people who might be reasonably suspected of a misdeed. In the first case greasy finger-marks on a glass revealed who had been drinking some rectified spirit. The pattern was unique, and, fortunately, the doctor had previously obtained a copy of it. They agreed with microscopic fidelity. Denial was useless, for of all the fingers tried only that of the accused could make a mark to correspond exactly with that on the glass. In the other case dirty finger-marks of a person climbing a white wall were negative evidence of an incontrovertible kind. No person engaged in the doctor's establishment could possibly produce the finger-marks that were in evidence. That was conclusive proof that not one of them was the offender. The finger-prints afford an incomparably surer criterion of identity than any other bodily feature. It may be assumed that there cannot be such a thing as an exact correspondence between two finger-marks made by different persons. Mr. Galton does not say that such an agreement is utterly impossible, but after elaborate and exact calculation he shows that the chance of its occurrence is represented by one against ten thousand million! Is not that enough to convince the most sceptical that finger-prints are as nearly as we can conceive infallible means of identification?

A WOMAN OF SICYON.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"SHALL we sing again, O Arion? For I saw the grasses move yonder, and methinks that Pan himself is listening in the thicket."

The speaker, a girl of Sicyon, the city that bred the loveliest women in Greece, shook a drowsy bee from the folds of her long purple robe and fanned her flushed face softly with a plume of brown and green grasses. Her companion, a lad

some years her junior, changed his recumbent posture to a kneeling attitude, and took up his cithara—rich with carvings, and gold, and silver, and scarlet colouring—and began a soft and mournful prelude:

"Shall we not praise thee on the reed, the reed;
Shall we not praise thee who art lord indeed?"

Then the girl took up the chorus in her flute-like voice:

"Who art lord indeed!
Lord of the land, lord of each stream that ran
Among the reeds, the reeds that love thee, Pan.

"Lord of the flying hounds, the patient kine,
Lord of the singing reeds, and lord of mine. . . .
Lord of the satyrs hidden on the hill."

Arion stopped, and Lai took up the chorus again, but more softly:

"Lord of the Dryad-folk whose flutings fill
The valley and the hill,
And lord of Syrinx, lost but loving still."

There was a pause; then Lai rose with a cry and buried her face on Arion's breast, as the reeds and grasses parted to let two figures pass—one goat-hoofed and shaggy-limbed, with an odd twist of fun about the bearded lips, and an infinite sorrow in the brown eyes that had so long missed the smiles and frowns of Syrinx; the other a mere boy, with a garland of green leaves round his golden head, and a purple cloak cast loosely round him. In his hand he held a flute.

"They are gods," Lai moaned, clinging closer to Arion, "and we shall die for having looked on them."

Pan laughed till the parsley in his garland shook and shivered.

"Poor maid, have no fear. We liked thy piping well, this shepherd of Olympus and I."

"We have come," said the other god softly, "to offer gifts. Behold what I, Hermes, have to give," and he drew out from the folds of his cloak a cithara of black polished wood, not painted or inlaid as was Arion's own, but redolent of some strange perfume. At the same moment Pan held up his flute.

"Lai, daughter of Coreas, choose," he said.

"Mark well," Hermes said gravely, "love goes with the flute, and fame with the cithara. And love is a rose, maiden, and if it blows twice as do the roses of Pæstum, it does no more. And fame is a wind that sometimes no ears can hear, and sometimes it shakes the stars. Choose."

Lai stretched out her hands with a pretty air of mingled fear and eagerness.

"I choose flute, rose, and love," she

said, "O shepherd of Olympus! For the twice-blooming roses of Pæstum are the fairest flowers that I know."

"Thou hast chosen," Hermes answered gravely, "and I say not thou hast chosen ill. Youth, what dost thou choose? I also have a flute to give."

"Nay, Lord Hermes," Arion said eagerly, "let me have the cithara, for the wind is sweet and strong, and the rose is sweet only for a day. Give me the fame, O Shepherd, and love I will win for myself."

"Boldly spoken," Hermes said, with his grave smile. "Yet say I not that thou hast chosen well. Years hence, perhaps, thou wilt find the wind too strong for thy bridle—and thou, maid, mayest find thy rose not sweet at all. And if the gifts prove ill, blame not the goat-god, nor the herald of Zeus; for to-day we give, indeed, but to-morrow we take not back; for the gifts of gods are not to be withdrawn. Peace with ye."

"Peace—and pleasure!" Pan said, as he parted the reeds right and left, pausing for a last look at Laïs, whose lovely face was flushed with triumph. "Some day ye shall sing to me that song of Syrinx when Fate's hand is heavy on ye, and I shall surely hear and help."

"Love Laïs," Arion said, as the reeds closed after the two gods, "shall we change our gifts? For the flute is not meet for the lips of modest maids, and if thou choosest, I will give thee up my cithara."

"Nay, nay," Laïs said, laughing, "I will keep the flute, Arion, and mayhap I shall win with it as much fame as the shepherd gave thee with the cithara. Nay, hold me not, I will to the city, and some day I will take many hearts with my flute. Back, Arion; when we two are famous, we will speak together again. Go, play and praise Hermes on thy cithara, but I will go praise love's eyes and love's lips, and the doves and myrtles of love's mother. Ai, ai, Aphrodite! be good to me henceforward." She ran away, laughing merrily, and the south wind brought back to Arion the echo of her flying footsteps and her laughter.

"Thou wilt take me over yonder strip of sea, and land me on the island Cyprus, O captain?"

The Phœnician captain looked at the speaker with some disfavour; then his eyes fell on the gold chain about the stranger's neck and the jewels sparkling in the scented wood of his cithara, and his face relaxed into a smile.

"Be pleased to mount on deck, gracious lord. If the wind is favourable, and the storm be slow of coming, we shall make Cyprus ere sunset. My lord goes to worship at the shrine of Lady Venus, it may be?"

"Nay, but I go to sing to Ion of Smyrna and his bride. There are others on board for Cyprus, as well as myself!" glancing at a pile of cushions placed by the bulwark—cushions of purple fringed with gold and silver.

"Ah, yes! The Lord Agathos goes also to worship at the shrine of Venus, and with him goes the fairest flute-player in Greece. Look; yonder she comes. Saw ye ever a comelier flute-girl?"

The cithara-player looked, and his lips grew pale under his golden beard, for the woman coming upon deck was his lost love, Laïs—lost to him and to herself more utterly than ever; for her dress was the shameless dress of a Bacchante, and the roses of Venus were wound in her black hair. She threw herself on the purple cushions and looked at Arion—at first with idle curiosity, but presently with a quickened terror in her eyes; and presently she turned and said a word in the ear of the man who stood beside her, wearing a robe like hers, with a garland of vine-leaves instead of roses on his handsome head. He glanced at Arion enquiringly, and presently crossed the deck and laid his jewelled hand on the singer's shoulder.

"It is the will of my mistress Laïs that thou come near and speak to her," he said languidly.

Arion shook his head.

"I have naught to do with thy mistress Laïs," he said. "I am but a singer bound for Cyprus, and I pray thee let me be."

"I pray thee stand aside," the captain said sharply in their ears. "The squall is on us. Look to the lady."

The Athenian went hurriedly back to Laïs, and Arion stood still in his place, holding the bulwark with both hands to steady himself, as the wind changed its quarter, and whipped down upon the ship with a rattle of thunder and a lash of sleety rain. It grew darker and darker, and wilder yet, but Arion kept his place, and saw that Laïs and her lover retained theirs, though the rain drenched their light garments and tore the roses in Laïs's hair asunder petal by petal.

"Old Oceanos is wroth with us," one of the Phœnician sailors shouted to another. "We have one on board that he desires

for himself. My captain, is it the woman yonder?"

"In the name of all the devils," Agathos, the Athenian, cried, "stand back. I will put my knife through the throat of the first man who comes within a yard of my flute-girl."

"I also," Arion said, hurrying across the slippery deck, and taking his place at Laïs's left hand.

"Thou also!" the captain cried, laughing. "Why, it is thou that old Father Oceanos desireth. Lay hands on him with the cithara, men, and heave him overboard."

"Ay," Laïs said, with a burst of wild laughter, "send him to play to the Shepherd of the Sea, good captain. Stay a moment," as the men closed round Arion. "Thou who didst love me once—who anon wouldst not speak with me—wilt thou sing for me, at this last of thy life? Wilt thou, Arion? Sing me a song of Aphrodite."

Arion lifted his cithara from the deck.

"I will sing for thee, but not that song, daughter of Coreos," he said steadily. "Give orders that no man lay hands on me till my song be done."

"Let no man touch him," Laïs said, looking sternly round. "Now sing to me."

Arion stood up on the poop and struck a few wild notes; then he sang:

"'Shall we not praise thee on the reed, the reed——'"

"No!" Laïs screamed. "Not that song, in the name of the Fates. Sing of me—sing a curse down upon me—but not that song."

"Thou didst promise, daughter of Coreos, to hear me sing one song, and afterwards thou mayst do with me what thou wilt," Arion said coldly. "Make me shriek anon with thy tortures, if thou canst, but now, in the name of them that spin, and measure, and cut, I will sing this song—if the word of Laïs stands good."

"Sing thou on," Laïs said, pressing her hands to her bosom. "My word holds good."

So Arion sang, and as he sang the last line, "And lord of Syrinx, lost but loving still," he moved forward a step or two, and with the last word plunged into the sea. Then there "rose a shadow and a shriek," and the sea-water parted to take the figure of Laïs, and the next moment her drowning head rose close to Arion's. He let his

cithara go, and caught her lifted hands in his.

"Love Laïs! Grasp me firmer, sweet, and I will save thee."

"Save me for Agathos?" she gasped. "Nay, for here on the sea I am thine wholly, Arion, but ashore I cannot trust myself. Kiss me swiftly, dear, and let me show thee how a flute-player and a woman of Sicyon can die."

She tore her hands from Arion's wild clasp, and clasped them over her eyes; and the next instant the singer saw her gilded robes whirled under by a great wave. And the irony of the Three who spin, and measure, and shear the thread, drove Arion ashore, safe and unhurt, his cithara clasped in the hands forlorn of Laïs till the Styx should be crossed.

AN ARCADIA OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS.

A LAND in which "there is nothing of what would be called crime" seems to be very Utopian in character to us erring inhabitants of Europe. This is, however, the description, and part of the official description too, which was furnished by an agent of the British Government, of an interesting nook in an unfrequented corner of the world.

The Arcadia of which I speak lies far away in the western South Pacific some fifteen to twenty degrees west of the Fiji and Friendly Islands, and seventeen hundred miles from Auckland by steamer, and it consists of a group of seven islands, extending over an ocean area two hundred miles square. They are on the verge of the tropics, the climate is pleasant and healthy, and the land extremely fertile. The seven islands—Mangafa, Mauke, Mitiaro, Hervey Island, Aitutaki, and Rarotonga—are collectively known as Cook Islands.

Up to the last two or three years this little archipelago was one of the few spots which, although it had not escaped from the influence of his trail, was very little favoured by the presence of the white man. Nor indeed did the inhabitants appear over anxious to enjoy this favour, inasmuch as in 1888 the agent of the London Missionary Society was the only foreigner allowed to reside in some of the islands, while of one island it was remarked, in terms not encouraging to the enterprising white-face, that "two Portu-

guese and a Chinaman reside on the island, and eke out a living by trading and baking." Nevertheless, the natives, who are an offspring of the intelligent Maori race, are courteous in their manners and industrious in their habits.

In spite of this apparent hostility to the white man's progress, they were keenly alive to the advantages of his assistance and co-operation, and accordingly, about the year 1888, a hearty invitation was given to the British Government to assume a protectorate over the group. H.M.S. "Hyacinth," commanded by Captain Bourke, thereupon paid a visit to these interesting shores, was enthusiastically received, and the Union Jack was hoisted with due ceremony. As it would be an anomaly to have the British flag flying over an island where Englishmen were not allowed to reside, prompt notice was given that the law which made that provision would have to be abrogated. Not for a year or two, however, did the authorities feel sufficient interest in the matter to appoint a British Resident, and the moral influence of the English flag, which waved over the heads of the natives, was apparently deemed sufficient.

Long before this another force had exercised a vast and beneficial influence over this region, and with results as novel as they would be unexpected to the sceptical European. Some twenty years previous the London Missionary Society's agents had formed a settlement on the islands, and their teaching meeting with remarkable success, they were able to shape the native government in accordance with the most theocratic principles. Church-membership was made an indispensable qualification for office from the King to the policeman, and all church members, in the case of some of the islands, were ex-officio policemen, and responsible for the due observance of the law. The laws were consequently a mixture of ecclesiastical and secular rules and enactments, and were rigorously enforced. Repressive measures were adopted with regard to the liquor traffic. At a later period an inquisitive European desired to witness an "orange-beer carousal," and was taken by a friend to the forest in which one was proceeding at the time. After tasting the muddy liquid he was about to return, when the party, some twenty in number, suddenly scattered, leaving only the two white men and the native who had charge of the beer-tub.

The cause was soon apparent in the arrival of two chiefs known to be policemen. They heard the explanation, and after taking counsel together, decided to make no report, but invited the white men to join them in prayer, that they might be saved from temptation and sin in the future. They prayed for all natives and white men, for Queen Victoria, and for their own Arikis—native Kings and Queens—and governors. Then overturning and breaking up the tub, they told the white men and those in charge of it to depart in peace, and sin no more.

The Ariki, of which there are several, in some islands governs his or her own territory, and carries out or disregards at his or her pleasure, the laws passed by the General Council for that island. At Mangaia, however, the chiefs really rule, and make or unmake the Arikis at their discretion. There the Arikis do not exercise any direct power; but, as they always represent old and illustrious families, their prestige is great. Their principal office is to communicate the will of the chief to the people. The judges, or magistrates, administer the laws, and the policemen give effect to their decisions. At Mangaia, two Kings were ruling the same tribe; but one of them being found guilty of acting contrary to law, was publicly deposed. This involved the loss of his church membership also, which was regarded as much the more serious of the two punishments.

The old code of laws in the principal island, Rarotonga, is an exceedingly quaint one, and was adopted by a council of Arikis in 1879. The first enactment provides that no one is allowed to make evil use of any of the Lord's works—such as asking a sorcerer to find out the cause of sickness, or as to the discovery of a thief. For this offence a fine is enforced, and the culprit is referred to Leviticus xx. 6, and other texts.

Another enactment provides there shall be no trading on the Sabbath, that all avoidable work is prohibited, and the sacredness of the day is to be observed and recognised. No one is allowed to walk about from house to house while the people are in church, except to visit a sick friend, or to help to strengthen the house against a hurricane; or if a pig dies, to get it in and cook it; or if a canoe is carried out to sea, to recover it; or to cook food for those who come from sea or a journey; or to bring water if there is none in the house, and so on. A policeman, however,

may walk about, and if a vessel arrives on the Sabbath a boat may go off to see if her people require food or drink, which may then be taken to them. Medicine may be fetched; but if people travel needlessly from one place to another they are to be fined five dollars.

The Bohemians, whose habits were not of the most regular order, met but scant encouragement; and only fishermen and people for a proper cause were allowed to go about at night. Any one who did so after nine o'clock was required, by way of penalty, to do five fathoms of road-mending.

With their primitive habits the natives combine much courtesy of manner, and, for South Sea Islanders, may be said to have acquired no small degree of polish. The law, with paternal kindness, views this quality with some favour, and, as far as possible, discourages any tendency in a contrary direction. Thus it is laid down that when any feast is being held, and food and things are brought, the things must not be rushed. The wedding guest is exhorted to sit quietly, "and when you have received your share, go in peace. If you have no share, do not rush, but rise up and go away quietly. If you do otherwise the fine will be five dollars, or its equivalent in goods, labour, etc."

The code winds up by declaring card-playing is not allowed in this land.

Not less quaint were the laws of the island of Mangaia, in which likewise the prohibition of sorcery was the first provision. Card-playing was not allowed, and an enactment provided that "if a man puts his arm round a woman in the road at night, and he has a torch in his hand, he shall go free. If no torch, to be fined one dollar cash, and nine dollars in trade." Presumably if the gay Mangaian carried a torch, the ladies would be sufficiently warned to be able to keep out of his way. That is, of course, if they chose.

Tattooing was not a practice which was regarded with friendly eyes by the authorities. The man who tattooed love-marks on a woman, or the woman who did them on a man, was to be fined. Nor did the law display any weakness in other questions of sentiment. If a man cried after a dead woman, and he and the woman were not relations, or if he wore mourning for her, he was fined fifteen dollars. A memorandum following the enactment, added: "This is taken as a proof of guilt during life." Hence it may be inferred that the

intelligent native knows little and cares less about the philosophy of Plato. On the doctrine of Sabbath observance, however, he is firm, for no one was allowed to go to another village on Sunday without good cause, that is unless he was willing to run the risk of being fined.

In this island, as, indeed, is the case with the others, the police were so numerous a body, and exercised such great control, as to be almost pantomimic in their absurdity. At Mangaia they numbered one hundred and fifty-five, or about one to every twelve of the population. They were themselves under no authority, and investigated charges upon which they practically decided, as the judge generally accepted their statements without question. They were also the prosecutors, and, to complete the system, police and the judges alike depended for their pay upon the fines they levied, which were divided weekly. Such a system could not, of course, be carried out without many evils, and very cruel punishments were at one time the practice. Some inflictions, again, were decidedly curious. In Mangaia, for example, if a man quarrelled with his wife and left her, or vice versa, the police "put them in irons," as it was termed. That is to say, they handcuffed the right arm of one to the left arm of the other, and kept them so, often for days, till their differences were amicably arranged.

Naturally Europeans objected to be fettered by such paternal regulations, and when, after the proclamation of British protection, white traders found their way to the Cook Islands, their ideas of the fitness of things did not entirely coincide with those of the inhabitants. The latter were, on their side, somewhat alarmed by the prospect of a European invasion, and made some attempts to restrict it, if not by directly refusing the right of residence, by placing such burdens on their trade as made it difficult for the white men properly to negotiate their business. One white trader who had offended against the native laws was expelled, and the matter led to much litigation and conference between the native authorities and the representatives of the British Crown. The manner in which the peccant trader was expelled was an amusing example of the "suaviter in modo, fortiter in re." Never was a banishment carried out in so affectionate a style. In answer to his complaint, the natives replied that they had not forcibly expelled him, but had done so in the

gentlest manner possible. They showed the court of enquiry how they had led him off between two men, each with an arm round his neck and shoulders in the most friendly manner. One of them, after thus putting him on board his boat, had cried over and sympathised with him. This the trader admitted, but added that he had to go for all that.

When, towards the close of the year 1890, a Resident was appointed to represent British interests in the islands, steps were promptly taken to amend the existing laws. The opening up of trade and the introduction of official life will, without doubt, have much influence on the quick-learning Cook Islander. Still it is sincerely to be hoped that the old simplicity of life and courtesy of manner will not desert him.

I have already spoken of the fertility of the soil, and the pleasantness of the climate. To these qualities these favoured islands may add the advantages of lovely scenery. From his home nearly two thousand miles away, the New Zealander has already cast his eyes upon them, and projected the idea of a direct line of steamers which shall carry him to a sunny resort during the cold winter of the south land, where he may wander amid gardens of cotton plants, coffee, tobacco, copra, arrowroot, fungus, oranges, limes, and bananas, for these and indeed all tropical fruits flourish luxuriantly in the Cook Islands. In Rarotonga coffee of excellent quality grows in wild thickets self-sown from the dropping seeds of trees planted by the missionaries more than thirty years ago. Since that time not a tree has been planted by the natives, but within the last two years more than forty acres have been planted by Europeans. All kinds of native food, such as taro, bread-fruit, kumeras, yams, bananas, and the indigenous plantain, are fine and abundant. The products of temperate climes also do well, and maize flourishes, although it is but little cultivated, and is not eaten by the natives. The staple animal food consists of pigs and poultry, but other livestock does well in all the islands, a species of indigenous wire-grass affording an excellent feed.

The universal occupation is agriculture. Nevertheless, many of the natives are skilful mechanics. They build capital whale-boats, and are capable of building vessels up to a hundred tons. They are also good sailors. Their houses are of rubble coral stone, smoothly plastered with

the lime which they make from coral. In habits they are very cleanly whenever water is obtainable, and in all cases keep their villages in excellent order. Furniture is not yet in popular use, but the houses of the Arikis, which are two-storeyed, with balconies, having solid and thick walls, have their large and lofty rooms well furnished.

Almost universally the natives read and write in the native tongue, yet as the new regulations require that English only should be used in the schools, probably ere long the native tongue will be superseded. Nevertheless, since the careful training of the missionaries has not succeeded in eradicating all the old principles deep in the breast of the islander, the destruction of their old individuality and primitive habits may be more than the new European influence can accomplish. More regrettable than this contingency by far is that apparent tendency of the race to disappear, a tendency which has grown under, or has been accentuated by the introduction of European influence. Let the philosopher explain why this should be so in a spot where all the conditions exist in an almost perfect degree for the nurture and growth of a race. A thousand pities were it that the Cook Islands should become a mere trading mart and plantation; and that the old race, courteous, intelligent, gentle, and industrious, should vanish from the face of the earth.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

BY MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*The Thirteenth Brydairn*," "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benefits of Clergy*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

"AND Mary Miller's Susan Hannah's took bad, is she?"

"Why, yes. And Mary in a fine way, and no mistake. There's all those children, and the baby not three weeks old till to-morrow."

"Is it catching, then — what Susan Hannah's took with?"

"From all I can make out, it's that same my Bill had. Last Wednesday was three months since he got over it. None of us took no harm from him, though Dr. Meredith he said it was just a chance. But you'll see all Mary's children will. She's that sort as never has no luck. Look at her husband!"

It was three days after Dr. Meredith's walk along the Hollow Holes. That had

taken place on a Wednesday, and this was a Saturday.

The inhabitants of Mary Combe were possessed of very definite views on a great variety of subjects. Some of these "fixed ideas" were decidedly undesirable. To their eradication Mr. Howard, the hard-worked and hard-working young Vicar, devoted most of his time on six days out of the seven, with a moderately satisfactory result only.

The weekday existence of Mary Combe was regarded by it as somewhat harassed by this his practical exhortation. Sundays, on the contrary, on which Mr. Howard tried to make his strongest stand and protest of all, were looked upon as islands of refuge in their stormy sea.

"Parson, he's out of the way more, Sundays—took up with his sermons and that," was the current explanation of the feeling of peace the day engendered; sermons being, to the mind of Mary Combe, institutions before which custom demanded silence, but in themselves wholly an abstract quantity with no bearing whatever on anything.

However, Mr. Howard's time as Vicar of Mary Combe had as yet been limited, and some of the most cherished convictions were already tottering. And to give them their due, the people of Mary Combe were not worse than those in other places. The fixed ideas, also, were not all erroneous. Some were even praiseworthy. Among them was that which, from time immemorial, had set aside Saturday afternoon as an universal half-holiday. Of course, this is a fairly general institution; but the spirit of its observance differs greatly in different parts of England. In that corner of it which contained Mary Combe, there would seem to have been lingering traces of a livelier age, for the people devoted themselves to enjoying it with a vigour that would have astonished those imaginative pessimists for whom the dwellers in rural districts are only a heavy-hearted crowd, broken with the load of unremitting, ill-paid toil. The mothers set to work early, always, to "clean" their homes, their children, and themselves; and all with much the same measure of energy. This being accomplished, the men came home, and went through the same process as regarded themselves, some of them reappearing in a sort of foretaste of Sunday clothes, by way of emphasizing the occasion.

Then every one proceeded to enjoy whatever in his or her own eyes consti-

tuted relaxation—out of doors, if possible, naturally.

The men worked in their gardens; sat on their door-steps and took a contemplative pipe, possibly enhanced by conversation with a friend across the street. One or two went fishing, and some turned their hands to mechanical diversion—private cabinet-making, or the like, or it might be household mendings.

To this choice of occupations had lately been added one which had its origin in what was at first contemptuously condemned as "another of them fancies o' parson's." Mr. Howard had divided a long narrow slip of land on a slope which rose on one side of the street into "allotments." These, after the proper amount of distrust and disfavour had been bestowed, had become both popular and much sought after. And Saturday afternoons generally found several men at work there.

The young men and the maidens chose, principally, the diversion of standing about in groups, each consisting exclusively of one sex, but each disposed, with curious coincidence, well within sight of the other, and each, almost invariably, talking with rapidity and energy of the other's proceedings. "Walkings out" were not practised on Saturday afternoons. The evening might find a few "couples" strolling up the Hollow Holes, but Sunday was the one customary occasion for this ceremony.

The women, that is to say the mothers of families, chose diversions varying with the age and number of the families in question. If these were no longer young enough to "get into mischief," their guardians were wont to establish themselves comfortably, and hold long and earnest conversations on their worries across fences or walls, with another matron who wiled the worries and the moments away with loquacious sympathy. If, on the contrary, the family were young, numerous, and irresponsible, their protector would generally prefer a door-step, this being a more commanding position, so far as keeping an eye on them went, and also providing the great advantage—if she sat down in the doorway itself—of forming a sort of prison of the room at her back, in which the more mischievous units of the family might be kept in semi-control.

In this case, the socially inclined friend sometimes sat modestly on what was left of the step, but more often leaned against the door-post, in an attitude the comfort of which is greater than might be believed.

The two women who were so hopefully discussing the fate and circumstances of their mutual friend, Mrs. Miller, were thus disposed in and against a house about half-way up the street of Mary Combe. From it almost all the "street" was visible—from its beginning, down by the common, to its ending in the lane bordered by elms that led up to the church. The scene, though no dimmest conception of the fact had even dimly presented itself at any time either to the two talkers or to any of their friends, was a sufficiently picturesque one. The irregularity of the outlines of the houses, their differing tints and colours, the breaks made between them by here and there a clump of trees, and here and there a larger bit of garden, or straggling bit of orchard, together with the soft green outline against the sky of the sloping ridge of field opposite that formed the "allotments", all made a whole of character and charm. To the right of the women as they sat, lower down the street, that is to say, was the warm red brick of Dr. Meredith's garden wall; to the left, nearer the elm trees, the pointed roof of Wilson's carpentering shed cut into the blue of the sky. The whole was lit by the steady radiance of the April afternoon sun, which caught and brought out vividly every stray bit of colour in the dresses of the girls who were standing about in scattered knots, and the sunny hair of some of the children who might be described as being everywhere.

Well within sight of the two women in question were their respective husbands, engaged on the allotments. And Mrs. Green, the woman who had begun the discussion, had, beyond Green, no family cares to vex her soul. Not that she had never known any; on the contrary, as she herself expressed it, they "all laid in the churchyard." This meant, when explained, that she had lost six children in years gone by; a loss which brought with it a certain dignity. Mrs. Green's position was considered far more worthy of respect, for instance, than that of Mrs. Allen, who had only "buried one."

Though it is capable of a distinctly humorous aspect, the sort of aliding-scale of deference that is paid, among the poor, to those who have had heavy losses or deep trouble, possesses a curious half-hidden touch of something greater; it is a deference to, and respect for, the cause, and not the effect, that is the foundation of it.

From the statement that Mrs. Allen

possessed nine little Allens to console her for the loss of that one in the past, it will be easily inferred that it was she who was sitting protectively on the door-step, and Mrs. Green who leaned carelessly against the door-post.

Both women had some work in their hands; Mrs. Green was knitting socks, the size and texture of which declared Green to be a man of stalwart proportions and strength; Mrs. Allen was engaged in mending a jacket, which was evidently the "Sunday wear" of one of the nine. Her work was much interrupted by glances constantly cast in one of three directions; first, into the street, where a detachment consisting of five of the eldest of her sons and daughters were playing just in front of the gate that led into the allotments; secondly, into the kitchen behind her, where two of a more tender age were safely immured; and lastly, to the tiny strip of garden that ran in front of the house. In the corner of this domain the oldest girl was amusing, with some difficulty, the newest baby.

She broke off in her enumeration of Mrs. Miller's disabilities, to reprove the girl for the fretting cry the baby began to set up—a method of up-bringing of which the advantages are but dimly discerned by the recipient. Mrs. Allen found it always difficult to break off when started on any topic—even the daily exhausted one of reproof. Consequently it was several moments before an opportunity offered for Mrs. Green to reply.

"Ab, yes, poor thing!" she exclaimed at length, with a long-drawn sigh. She did not explain whether the pity of her speech applied to Mrs. Miller or her husband, on the relations between whom some held that there were two opinions; but Mrs. Allen evidently was not among such.

"Poor thing, indeed!" she replied with a vigorous stitch to the jacket, "if I was her and had him I don't know what I shouldn't do."

"There's a many says she was a good-looking sort of a woman when she first come to Mary Combe," pursued Mrs. Green. She was in an intricate part of the massive sock, and she spoke half-abstractedly, but still as one deeply interested in the topic.

"I've heard that myself," responded Mrs. Allen. "There's not much of it left to see nowadays. But the children have got a nice look with them. Thomas Benjamin!" The last apparently wholly irrelevant ejaculation was spoken over

Mrs. Allen's shoulder into the kitchen, whence a terrific scraping of chairs on the stone floor had proceeded. As the same scraping subsided instantly on the sound of Mrs. Allen's voice, it is to be inferred that the words were the name of its creator. "If you don't play pretty and quiet with Emily," continued Mrs. Allen severely, "mother'll have to come to you." In the dead silence produced by this statement, Mrs. Allen turned cheerfully back to her work and her conversation as if no interruption had occurred. "Susan Hannah in particular," she continued, "is a pleasant kind of girl in looks. It's a thousand pities as she should be ill, and just heard of a place and all."

"Have they had Dr. Meredith to her?"

"Yes, to be sure they have. Had him the first day she was took. And every day since; for I've seen him go on there with my own eyes, when he's come out of Tom Wilson's."

The latter name seemed to suggest to Mrs. Green a wholly fresh train of thought.

"Ah!" she said, with a click of her knitting-needles, by way of emphasis; "she's not long for this world, poor Jane Wilson ain't."

A confirmatory and comprehensive shake of the head from Mrs. Allen greeted this assertion. And a quick stitch or two at the jacket was accompanied by an equally quick sigh of sympathy.

"I was there day before yesterday," she said a moment later; "I never saw a face with death in it plainer, never! And it's not two years since Tom Wilson married her. She's a good ten years younger than me, too," Mrs. Allen added parenthetically.

"It seems young to go, don't it?" responded Mrs. Green. With which words both women fell into a short silence.

It was broken by a vigorously shouted scolding from Mrs. Allen to her eldest son, who was preparing to execute gymnastics on the top bar of the allotment gate.

"Just you come down off that there this minute, Ted!" were the tersely emphatic concluding words of her reproof.

Ted obeyed, seeing that his mother's eyes were fixed on him; and, having seen him safely on the ground again, Mrs. Allen returned to her work.

Meanwhile, it would appear that Mrs. Green had been casting about for a fresh subject of conversation, and had lighted upon the connecting link between the last two.

"Dr. Meredith, he's up and down

street all day long, as you may say," she remarked tentatively. Her tone implied that she had a large reserve fund of interesting conversation in the topic she had started, but that before proceeding, she invited comment, so to speak, on her prelude.

And the comment was very ready.

"That he is!" responded Mrs. Allen, at once; "from mornin' to night he's at it. It's only the other day—let me see, Wednesday it was, for I see Mr. Martin drive down on his way home from market in the afternoon as I said it in the evenin'—Wednesday it was, Dr. Meredith was up at Wilson's after I'd cleared away our suppers; and as he come past our door, I saw him; and I says then to Allen that the doctor looked like one as was pretty near wore out."

"There's been a lot of people ill lately," said Mrs. Green. "And he sees to them, too. That's where it is. Look how often he come to me in my rheumatics, and me upstairs three weeks and more! I quite believe you," she added fervently, "and it's the same tale everywhere. Why, I was in her house when he come in, Tuesday, to old Maria Reeves; and he looked just like a man as had done such a day's work as he felt fit to drop. I ask' him to sit down, taking it upon myself, Maria being so hard of sight and hearing; and he says, 'No, thank you, Mrs. Green; I must be off to Farleigh.' And that was seven o'clock in the evenin', that was!"

Mrs. Green paused for breath.

"I can't see, now, why he don't get some one to help him," pursued Mrs. Allen reflectively. "It's what he ought to have, that I'm very sure. If he don't do something of that he'll be making hisself ill with goin' here and hurryin' there, and never no time to his own, as you may say."

"It'll be a pity too," prognosticated Mrs. Green, with a cheerful pleasure in her forebodings; "a terrible pity, such a good doctor as he is. But you're right; that's what he'll do. And the next thing'll be, we shan't have no one."

Mrs. Allen was just about to confirm this view of the future, and had, indeed, lifted her head to do so, when something wholly distracted her attention, and cut off her words.

"Lor!" she exclaimed excitedly, "now who ever's that? Just you look there, Mrs. Green."

The nearest group of young people was

only separated from the two by some fifty yards or so. It consisted of girls who a few moments earlier had been all engaged in unceasing chatter on some common interest, standing close together in order, presumably, each to obtain a better hearing. At this instant they were scattered and broken up, and were all staring at a stranger who had just accosted one of them.

The strange figure was that of a young man. He was tall and rather slight; so much was evident, as also was the fact that he was dressed in a suit of grey tweed, and carried a Gladstone bag in his hand.

"Lor!" responded Mrs. Green, who had not lost a moment in echoing Mrs. Allen's adjuration. And if her vocabulary was circumscribed, her emotion was not. A stranger, that is to say a wholly unexpected stranger, was an event in Mary Combe. The advent of any of Mr. Howard's friends, who were rather like angel visitants, was always known beforehand, the news of their expected arrival being wafted about the village by his faithful manservant and factotum in plenty of time, and their appearance was therefore met with a prepared and cultivated interest. The same principle held true of the few acquaintances who appeared as friends of their owners at any of the few farmhouses in or around the village. And it was far removed from the most adventurous walking tourist's route. An unlooked-for appearance like this was necessarily, therefore, attended by a sort of thrill of excitement.

"Some one as has missed their way!" suggested Mrs. Green, with breathlessness arising from concentration upon the centre of her surmise.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Allen, who, with her work neglected on her knee, had turned herself, the better to obtain a view of the stranger. "You just listen to hear what he's sayin' to them girls."

"It's my sister-law's Emma he's talking to," said Mrs. Green excitedly, before she obeyed this mandate.

"Will you tell me the way—I mean can you tell me please, if I shall find Dr. Meredith at his house?"

The voice that spoke was clear and full; pleasantly resonant, too. And its tones were very audible to the two listening women.

"Friend of the doctor's!" exclaimed Mrs. Allen.

"Quite the gentleman!" was Mrs. Green's simultaneous remark.

"My sister-law's Emma," a blooming, dark-haired girl in a tightly-fitting red bodice, rose but inadequately to the occasion. Possibly the reserved criticism of her fellows embarrassed her; possibly the stranger's waiting attitude deprived her of self-possession.

"Yon's his house," was all she could find to say. "Yon, with the brick wall." She nodded her handsome black head sideways by way of explanation, and gave a sort of twitch to her apron.

"Thank you!" was the answer.

The young man paused a moment, and seemed to hesitate, before turning to pursue his walk in the direction indicated. The tiniest vestige of a flush was visible on his smooth face, but the shade of his straw hat's brim effectually concealed it. The hat rested on a quantity of closely-cropped, dark, curly hair, and the eyes which followed the girl's gesture were large and grey, with a self-possessed steadiness in them, behind which steadiness something inexplicable seemed to lurk; something that was a subtle mixture of defiance and keen enjoyment.

"Can you tell me if I should be likely to find him in at this time of day?" he added, repeating his former question.

He changed the Gladstone bag to his other hand as he spoke, as if he found it a trifle heavy. His boots were dusty with the dust of a long walk.

The deficient Emma was elbowed out of the way hurriedly by a little, fair girl, who looked boldly up into the man's face. But before she could speak, a sharp, shrill scream cut through the air. It proceeded from Mrs. Allen's house. With one consent, the strange man, the group of girls, and every one else who was within reach of the sound, turned in the direction from which it came.

The door-step was empty; both Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Green had disappeared, and from within the house came a succession of cries and exclamations, in which Mrs. Allen's voice was discernible.

"What in the world is the matter?" said the young man. His words were probably more of an exclamation than a question, for, to judge from their faces, the girls were all much too occupied in forming alarming surmises on their own account to answer him.

"Come on!" said the dark-haired Emma briefly, starting off at a run

towards the Allens' house. She was followed closely by all the girls, and at a little further distance by, first, the strange young man, and a large proportion of all the people in the "street."

The foremost girls had just reached the door, when Mrs. Green, her knitting grasped confusedly all in one hand, her clean apron awry, came out of it at a pace as near a run as she could manage.

"Go for Dr. Meredith, one of you, do! Em, Bess, any one—hurry! Mrs. Allen's Thomas Benjamin's swallowed somethink off the mantelpiece, and he's choking fearful! He's black in the face now; he'll choke himself to death if you don't hurry!"

But neither Bess nor Em started on their errand. As Mrs. Green began to speak, the strange young man had pushed his way gently but decidedly to the front, and he broke in now upon her last words.

"I am a doctor," he said quickly. "I am come to be Dr. Meredith's assistant. Let me in, and I'll do my best for the child."

Mrs. Green fell back with a confused and incoherent exclamation of thanks, and the young man flung the Gladstone bag down on the garden path, and strode into the cottage. As his first proceeding was to shut the door behind him, the group of girls, augmented by this time into a little crowd, had to fall back upon themselves for excitement and interest. There was a moment or so of silent listening to what might be going on within, of which nothing could be heard or discerned save the sudden cessation of Mrs. Allen's cries and ejaculations.

And then one of the girls—it was the little fair-haired one who had faced him so audaciously when Mrs. Allen's first scream broke in on them—picked up, by way of giving point to the observations which were flying excitedly about with regard to the young man's statement of his business in Mary Combe, the Gladstone bag from the path.

"This here's his luggage!" she said, in the voice of one who establishes with all confidence a prior claim to attention.

"And very like got his name on it!" added another girl.

The little crowd surged as near as the limits of the garden would allow them. But there was no inscription on the bag beyond the two initials "A. G." in small white letters, and the pioneer girl received

scant credit for her discovery; and she put down the bag again with a feeling akin to the taste of the mythical apples of Sodom.

"Nice-looking sort o' chap!" "Pleasant spoken, too!" "And ready, all in a minute, like! 'I'm a doctor,' he says, and in he goes." "Youngish, too!"

These were the comments which circled confusedly among the crowd. Their hope and expectation of seeing the object of this excitement come out again grew stronger as every moment passed by. It seemed like half an hour, but it really was only ten minutes or so, before the door reopened; the strange young man's hand was seen to be resting on it, and the strange young man's voice was heard saying:

"I'm sure he'll do now, my good woman. I should give him his tea and put him to bed."

With the last words the strange young man came out, followed by Mrs. Allen, whose face bore traces of considerable and tearful agitation, and in whose arms the newly recovered Thomas Benjamin was closely clasped.

The baby face, for it was only three years old, looked very white, and the little black-haired head formed a sharp contrast of colour. Thomas Benjamin's experiences had evidently been sharply painful to him, and very exhausting.

"The child was 'most gone!" said Mrs. Green, emphatically detailing the whole occurrence later on. "It was one of them glass balls as Allen got at the seaside last summer. Who'd have thought he could have reached it off the shelf, goodness only knows! But reached it he had, and swallowed it he had. Leastways, it had stuck in the child's throat, and there it would a' been now, and him a corpse, if it hadn't been for that young gentleman."

"Don't distress yourself about him," the young man said very gently as Mrs. Allen's long sobbing breaths of agitation threatened to overpower her again, "I do assure you he will be all right now, and if you like I will——"

But the young man's intention remained unspoken. The sound of a horse's footsteps clattered out sharply on the hard road behind them, and the crowd turned with the sound.

"Here's Dr. Meredith!" half-a-dozen voices exclaimed.

The young man, instead of following the example of the crowd, stooped suddenly

to pick up his bag again. He could not see where it was at first, apparently, for it was quite half a minute before he raised himself again. When he did so there was again that tiny flush on his cheek, again that half-defiant, half-delighted look in his eyes. He strode through the group down to the little garden gate. His head was very erect, and notwithstanding that look, his eyes were fearlessly steady. He went through the gate, with his bag in his hand, straight up to where Dr. Meredith, in the middle of the road, had reined in his horse to listen to the confused answers which were eagerly offered to his question as to what was wrong. Dr. Meredith had gained, in the strife of tongues, a floating impression that some one's child had met with a slight accident, when this was obliterated by the much stronger impression that he must be either dreaming or losing his wits. The reason of this last feeling was the undercurrent of phrases that ran through the account concerning "the gentleman as is your assistant, sir."

He had not had time to think coherently, however, when, "Good evening, Dr. Meredith," caused him to look up and turn sharply.

There, on the other side of his horse to that from which he was bending down to listen, stood the young man in the gray tweed clothes. Dr. Meredith stared blankly at him. Then, with a movement so rapid as to make his horse swerve violently, he dismounted and took three strides up to the stranger; and Dr. Meredith and his assistant stood face to face. The light in the young man's eyes danced wildly, flamed up, and then seemed almost to flash. He held out his hand.

"Good evening," he repeated cheerily. "You did not expect me to-day, I know. But I have arrived, and I have also entered upon my duties as your assistant."

A succession of changes had passed over Dr. Meredith's face. The stare had resolved itself into a look of blank, hopeless bewilderment. This had been followed by a flash of keen anger, to be again obliterated by a look like that of a man who is

walking in his sleep. Mechanically he brushed his hand before his eyes.

"Good evening!" he responded. His voice, like his face, was vacant and toneless.

Then there was a little pause. The sunlight streamed down on the white road, on the tired horse standing patiently with his head drooping a little, the eager little crowd on the other side, and on the two figures facing each other. From the outskirts Mrs. Allen, still with Thomas Benjamin clasped to her heart, looked on interestedly.

The pause was broken again in an instant by Dr. Meredith. He gave an almost imperceptible start, with which he seemed to rouse himself from his bewildered dream, and then he spoke:

"I did not expect you to-day, as you say," he said in his ordinary voice; "but since you have arrived, pray come to my house. I am on my way there."

He caught the horse's bridle over his arm and prepared to walk on. The young man placed himself at his side, and as he did so Dr. Meredith made some sort of commonplace remark about the weather. The young man answered it at some length.

By this time they were out of earshot of the people, and Dr. Meredith, first realising this by a glance, spoke no more. They walked in complete silence. And it was in silence that Dr. Meredith opened the gate and motioned to the young man to precede him.

He hastily threw the reins of his horse to the groom, who had seen his approach, and stood waiting, with an exemplary readiness compounded of mixed motives, in which curiosity bore a strong part, and then he made the stranger again precede him into the house, and into the sitting-room. Once there, he turned the key sharply in the door, and placing himself with his back to it, faced the young man, who was standing apparently waiting for him to speak.

"Now, then!" he said. "Perhaps you will tell me what this means, Althea!"

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXII. DOLCE FAR NIENTE.

THE next morning Dora woke up full of new joy and new enthusiasm. She had never before paid a visit alone with Forster, nor had she ever visited a spot so far removed from busy life. When she looked out from her turret window, she could see far beyond the glen to where the mountains rose towering towards the sky. It was quite early, but she was not overtired with her journey, so dressing hastily she found her way out by a back door and hastened up the glen. The beauty and the wildness fascinated her, and as she followed the Rothery the music of nature made her heart bound with happiness.

When she reached the gate at the end of the glen she paused, still more enchanted, for now the mountain view was in sight. She could follow with her eyes the upland path miles upon its way, whilst lower down the valley wound round the foot of the treeless mountains, losing itself in the distance, now hidden by a slight haze.

"This is a place of beauty," thought Dora. "What a pity Forster did not marry the Princess! She would have been a delightful sister-in-law, but he never could fall in love with anybody. I don't believe he ever will."

She was just turning to retrace her steps when she found the Princess close beside her.

"I was just thinking of you, dear Princess," said Dora, speaking with the warm girlish enthusiasm which denotes young

happiness. "I could not resist coming out early to see your beautiful glen. But you are an early bird too."

"I always take this walk before breakfast, but I did not expect to find you. Are you rested? but I need hardly ask that. Do you know if Mr. Bethune had a good night?"

"I don't know yet. Let's go back and see. I am so glad he wanted to come here, for I am sure he will get strong under your care. He is certainly very much changed by that horrid fever."

"We will take care of him, and make him well," said Penelope in a low voice.

"I feel so much older now, but you, dear Princess, you look just the same, only—yes, I think you are more beautiful. You don't look as grave as you did abroad."

Penzie laughed softly.

"I have been rather dull and lonely all this winter. You will cheer me up. In old days I was never lonely. It is a dreadful price to pay."

"For what? For getting married?"

"Yes."

"But I don't wonder you are dull. You want Philip back again, of course. Mother was talking about it the other day."

"What did she say? She was always good to me." Penelope walked on in front, for the path was narrow, so that Dora could not see her face.

"Mother was saying that she was so very sorry that Forster's illness had prevented Mr. Winkell from coming home to you."

"I knew he could not come back direct'y."

"Yes, of course you are very good, but—well, mother thinks Forster ought not to have persuaded your husband to go."

"He did quite right."

"That's what I said, Forster must have

been right. When I am married, if Forster wants my husband to go to the North Pole, I know I shall let him go, and I shall think it quite right."

"You are very fond of your brother, Dora!"

"I should think so! He was always good to me when I was a child. He can't help being good to people, and having an influence over them. How lovely the Palace looks from here!"

Dora flitted about from one beauty to another. Her clear, happy voice woke the old echoes. It seemed to bring sunshine into Penzie's lonely soul. Besides, Dora was Forster's sister, and she was ready to open herself to her; as far, that is, as her pride allowed her to do.

When she had heard of the possibility of Forster's visit, her heart had given a bound of pleasure, and then the weight of reality had fallen upon her. For one moment she had thought of saying no, she even wrote a letter saying that her father's condition prevented her receiving visitors. Then she tore it up, and let chance have its way. She would see him. A terrible, inexplicable loneliness had taken possession of her: a loneliness she hid carefully from her uncle, and which she tried to drown by working at many things. But she could no longer hide it from herself. She loved Forster; his very name made music to her in her lonely walks, and over and over again she acted the scene which had so nearly made her his promised wife. It might have been; nothing hindered it but the pride of the old family, the intense desire to save the Palace and the name of Winakell from ruin. Often and often now, as she saw the signs of wealth about her, she recognized the folly of her old pride. She was not proud now. Love had burnt it out of her. A cottage on her estate looked more like a palace than did her own stately mansion. Love might live there, but in her home love was gone. But then came the thought that she was loved. She sometimes believed it and sometimes she doubted it, but in either case it was pain, and the winter of her discontent had seemed very long.

Now she determined to cast away all thought, and to live in the present. She would be happy now, now if at no other time. Forster was here; he was under her roof. She would be happy.

At the entrance she paused, and turning round to Dora, she kissed her.

"I am so glad you have come. I must

say it. You must tell me all that I must do to make your brother well. We shall cure him between us; of course we shall."

"Yes, of course. I'll run upstairs and see if he is rested."

"Breakfast is ready, so make haste. Here is my uncle."

Dora came back accompanied by Forster himself. He already looked brighter, and the summer sunshine which streamed in at the open window, lighting up oak panels and shining floors, threw an enchanting glory over the whole party.

"You have come to recruit, Mr. Bethune," said the Duke, "and I feel sure that the Rothery will take you in hand, and speedily make you strong. Penelope and I have been lately planning a boat suitable for laziness and for an invalid. My niece is a first-rate captain."

"If Mr. Bethune prefers solitude, Jim Oldcorn shall steer him," said Penzie, smiling. She was appearing in a new light. Much of her pride was gone, for she loved, and love is a teacher whose lessons are quickly learnt. He touches the soul, and makes it burn with new warmth.

She was so lonely! and wanted to know what happiness was like. The ambition of all her girlhood seemed now so poor, so worthless, compared with such love as she felt herself capable of giving, and yet must not give. But, even as she went over the past story, she always arrived at the same conclusion: she could have done nothing else, nothing else.

Then the three planned out their days of idleness and pleasure, apparently feeling very fresh and very happy, over the new task. They were none of them "used up" concerning this occupation. Dora was not more eager than the other two, but her eagerness served as the excuse; for, without a word to each other, Penelope and Forster felt that they were happy. They could not own it or discuss it. They only knew that each of them experienced a new life, a new joy which was entrancing, a joy they had not known previously to exist. When Forster had made her an offer, he had thought only of a wife in reference to his work. Now that there could be no question between them of working together, they understood what love might have been.

Dora, ignorant of all this—incapable of understanding it even had she known it—made the intercourse perfect. Where was the danger when a third was always with them? Why not enjoy the present when the present was purely a passing

event of no importance, which could have no result, and which could lead to nothing; which served only to make them conscious of happiness and of rest?

The King had not made his appearance. His presence was not even realised by the guests, and the Duke was as charming a host as could be found in England. The Palace and its surroundings made Dora believe that she was transported back into a French château before the Revolution. The beauty of the châteaux was however purely Teutonic, but the Duke had something French about his courtly manners, and he served to create the illusion.

The boat was indeed a delight for the invalid. He would lie back and drink in the beauty of the lake, whilst Dora and the Princess rowed lazily round the succeeding points, and explored the small bays. The tourist season had not yet burst upon the spot; besides, this was a place but little visited, except by lovers of mountain excursions and lonely walks.

Forster talked a little about the colony. He often mentioned Philip's name, but now and then it struck Dora as strange that Philip should not be here himself, and that he should not be doing the honours. She once even remarked, as she took the oar from Penelope and declared she would row them alone, that it was a pity Mr. Winakell could not see how well she rowed; but no one answered her remark except that Forster said "Yes."

Penelope was sitting near to him; her two hands were clasped on her lap, her cloak was thrown back, and the soft plumed hat she wore perfectly suited her style of beauty. Forster, sitting so as to be able to see her without turning his head, gazed at the picture. There was no harm in admiring her. Who could help it? He noted a new tenderness in her manner, he detected the often recurring blush; where was the old pride? Then he suddenly remembered that she was Philip's wife, and his mind went back to the old grievance. What business had Philip to give up so easily the treasure he had won? He had left her here alone and unprotected. Forster's conscience now soothed itself by the thought that every man is born to defend an injured woman, even if the man who is wronging her happens to be a close friend.

The idea that it is obligatory to become a knight errant is very dangerous and very subtle for a man of Forster's character. But he had voluntarily placed himself in

the way of danger, and he resolutely put away all thought of the future. Forster had never loved before. The malady is less deadly if some slight attack has been previously experienced, but the risk is great when a man has passed his first early manhood without having had his affections called forth. The very purity of his past years makes his danger, if wilfully neglected, all the greater.

This very afternoon, when the water of the lake reflected the gold and the blue of heaven, Forster felt that he should soon recover his former strength. He understood now that what he had wanted was the sight of the Princess. Everything else appeared insignificant in comparison to the knowledge that she was sitting close beside him, and that he could watch and learn by heart every line of her face.

But the life was simple enough. They landed at a rocky cave, where they had settled to drink tea. Penelope had ordered everything to be taken to this spot, whence a perfect, far-reaching view could be had. Dora was soon busy getting tea ready, begging the other two to sit down and talk, and to let her manage. What could be more delightful? Dora's presence took away the feeling of shyness, which might otherwise have made them both silent. Penelope thought, as she sat near Forster and listened to his talk, that she was perfectly happy. He was fond of discussing books, and he discovered that the Princess was far more cultivated than most women he had met, moreover she could form an opinion—a rare power in a woman.

Then followed the innocent fun of the picnic. Penzie's quick hands arranged the softest cushions for Forster, and Dora's talk was about the De Lucys and the idleness of Ida's brother, and other home matters. There was nothing worth recording in all the talk, but to the two it seemed perfect, and when they walked down again to the boat, conscience was lulled to sleep as the water lapped against the "Sea-spray."

Dora rowed them back, and as she had her back towards them, they could look oftener at each other, pretending even then that there was nothing in it. Once, however, Forster placed his hand upon hers, and for a few seconds her fingers closed over his and she held his hand, as a child might do. Then to herself she said:

"Where is my pride? How can I forget? But I can't help it. Only for a few days I can be happy, and I can know what it is

to be loved and to love. I did not know before, and how could I guess it?"

Suddenly she loosed her hand and turned her face away, so that Forster thought he had transgressed too far, and he became grave and sad. It was only when she stepped out of the boat that she placed her hand again on his, and this time the clasp was firmer, as if they both knew that resistance was useless.

When Penelope was dressing for dinner she selected her prettiest gown, and she knew that she did it to please Forster. When her maid left her she stood before the glass and gloried in her beauty. She was beautiful, and she saw it plainly and smiled. Was it her beauty that had made Forster love her? If so she was glad. Then all at once the candlelight flashed on her wedding-ring, and she blushed scarlet. She seized it and flung it angrily away from her.

"I am not his wife, except in the eyes of that stupid law," she exclaimed. "Oh! uncle, uncle, it was your doing. Why did you carry it out? Why, why?" Then she looked at her hand, free of all rings, and smiled. "Some day I must be free, I must; I am now really; but some day."

However, she slowly stooped and picked up the obnoxious circle, and, slipping it on again, she went down to dinner.

Very soon the conversation of the four sounded merrily in the old hall, and Dora's joyous laugh was heard in the panelled dining-room.

"Penzie, my dear, you look very well this evening," remarked the Duke, when the Princess rose to leave the table. "You see, Bethune's society suits us both. We have been much moped all the winter."

"I am sure that I shall get quite strong here," said Forster, as he watched the last fold of Penelope's dress sweep over the threshold.

SOME TRADITIONAL BELIEFS OF THE FRENCH CANADIANS.

HAVING their origin in the ancient traditions which formed a portion of the sacred inheritance bequeathed to the Canadian people by their French ancestors, their myths, tales, and superstitions live on with the glamour cast on them by the imagination of each succeeding generation. The French Canadians are a primitive people, simple in thought and belief, clinging closely to the customs of their forefathers. Among them civilisation has scarcely

invaded the sanctity of earnest faith, or broken its spell. Many traditions are held in the Province of Quebec, and on the shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, almost as firmly to-day as they were in the ancient days of faith. These myths have become as much a part of the people's environment as storm and sunshine, sowing and harvest, and have been accepted with a conviction as simple. Among a people so credulous that the toothache is cured by a charm, that a medal is hung around a cow's neck as an efficacious remedy for a cough, a Latin prayer fastened on a barn as a protection against fire or the invasion of thieves, where the dust collected from a dead woman's coffin is supposed to relieve disease, it is no wonder that superstition had retained its hold.

The Canadian legends are grounded in the essential idea of the national life, and the result is genuine originality. These tales of the soil reflect the sublime pageants of Nature—the beauty of open skies; the mystery of gloomy, trackless woods; the wild, free life of forest and hillside; the pathos of human tragedy and comedy; these impart to them the strength and freshness of reality. Whimsical as are many of these ancient tales, they are distinguished by qualities of sentiment and imagination, quaint drollery, pure morality, and primitive philosophy, and all are sweetened by human sympathy.

The early French settlers brought with them from Old France rich stores of tales, songs, and legends which they have retained almost unimpaired; together with these they adopted innumerable superstitions from their Indian allies. In order to thoroughly ascertain the spirit and motives of these old superstitions, it is necessary to form some idea of the condition under which they took root in Canadian soil. In the early days, during the obstinate and gallant struggle made by the French against fortune, the very existence of the colony was a miracle, and faith was an essential condition of life. The rulers and guides of the settlement were the Jesuits, men who with a serene courage courted martyrdom, but were steeped to the lips in superstition. Upon the shoulders of the savage red man the yoke of Christianity sat lightly, merely substituting new superstitions for old ones. The aspect of this new country was wild and terrible. The great lakes, like vast inland seas; the majestic rivers; the rolling prairies; the pathless forests; were all rich

in suggestions of mystery. Is it strange that weird and poetic conceptions should find their origin in this limitless, unknown region; or that the popular imagination should people the sombre recesses of the forest with mystic denizens?

The early French missionaries ascribed a very diabolical influence to the sorcery practised by the children of the forest. Père Arnaud, who spent many years in Labrador, remarks: "By the Indian wizards' strength of will, the wigwam moves like a table turning, and replies by knocks and leaps to the questions asked of it. Eh bien! you can see there spirit-rapping and table-turning surpassed. The familiar spirits of these Pagan Indians can really serve their masters, and show them things more wonderful than you can conceive. Our great magnetisers would be astonished to see the facility with which these magnetisers manage the magnetic fluid, which I shall willingly term diabolical fluid."

A tradition of the Indian giant Outikou, who was said to inhabit the mountains on the north side of the St. Lawrence, below Cacouna, still lingers in that vicinity. Outikou was the genius of evil; as he claimed the soul of his victims, the sound of his voice caused death. The belief in this giant who devours men was common, with many variations, to almost all savage tribes. Another Indian deity, Gougou, was supposed to haunt the Island of Misson, near the Bale de Châteaus. This monster, a woman of immense size, was provided with pockets sufficiently large to hold a ship; in these she kept her prey until she could devour it at her leisure.

Stories of an Indian witch, who once possessed immense influence among the Iroquois, are still common about Rivière Ouelle. She was called by the savages "Matshi Skouéon," and by the French, "Dame aux Glaisius," or, "Lady of the Iris." She was supposed to have sold herself to the devil, and by his aid to be able to work miracles. At the witching hour of midnight she descended on a shooting star or a pale ray of moonlight. In the marshes this sorceress gathered the iris flowers, with which she crowned herself when making her invocations to the Great Manitou. Under the shadow of huge rocks, amidst the foam of rushing cascades, or in the dense mists rising from the valley, she concealed herself to watch for little children, whom her song had power to fascinate. In order to torture

her victims she invented atrocious torments. Assailed by a vague, formless terror, they perished in slow agonies of fear. It was only when the cries of these suffering beings became audible, that the Evil One would reveal his secrets to his worshipper. Tradition asserts that this strange being was ultimately captured and burnt by her Indian enemies.

It is claimed that the conquest of Canada by the English was predicted by an Indian witch years before the event actually happened. When a Canadian lumberman has the good fortune to kill a deer, he wraps himself at night in the skin, in order to keep off the witches. It is greatly to the credit of the French Canadians that, however sincere might be their belief in witchcraft, they never inflicted upon those accused of sorcery the cruelties practised by their neighbours of Anglo-Saxon origin.

A savage was allowed to have no power over a baptised Christian, except when in a state of mortal sin. Different descriptions of magic were practised among the Indians. One species of wizard was called a medicine man, and professed to cure disease; another sort was termed an "adocté," that is one who has entered into a compact with a "Mahoumet." It is difficult to find the origin of this term, which the French colonists applied to the familiar spirits of the Indian sorcerers. A Canadian writer—Dr. J. C. Taché—offers the explanation that, considering the founder of Islamism the incarnation of all evil, the French applied his name, slightly altered, to these imps of darkness. Mahoumet was a species of goblin, who devoted himself to the service of his votary on the condition that the latter should offer him frequent sacrifices. He is described as a little man about two feet high, with a skin grey and shining like that of a lizard, and eyes that glowed like living coals. The *adoctés* bound themselves by a solemn oath, and it was only the sacraments of baptism, confession, and absolution that could break the covenant. Treachery between the contracting parties was not rare, neither being deterred by any scrupulous delicacy from trying to outwit the other; but as the *adocté* was the slave of his tormentor, he usually got the worst of the bargain. The spectre often became visible to his *adocté*, counselled him, and when not restrained by the influence of a magic superior to his own, aided him in his difficulties. Feuds

between these wizards were of common occurrence; through the power of their respective Mahoumets they played each other many malicious tricks, but in the end the weaker invariably perished. Unless a wizard abandoned his evil practices he always died a violent death.

The word "Iguolée" designates both a custom and a song imported from France by our ancestors; during many years it flourished in Canada, though even in the most remote country districts it now appears to have fallen into disuse. M. Ampère, chairman of the "Comité de la langue, de l'histoire, et des arts de la France," observes, in allusion to this song, "A chorus which is perhaps the only actual fragment left of the Druidical epoch." The custom is said to date from the time of the Gauls, and is believed to have originated in the Druids' habit of going out on New Year's Eve to gather the mistletoe which clung to the oaks of their sacred forests, and the name was derived from the rejoicing cry uttered by the Pagan priests as the hallowed plant fell beneath the golden sickle, "Au gui, l'an neuf." Christianity adopted the Pagan rite and sanctified it by charity. In French Canada a party of men, called "les Iguoleux," proceeded on New Year's Eve from house to house collecting for the poor of the parish, or in some localities begging wax to make tapers for the altars, and singing a chorus in which the word "iguolée" often occurred, the term assuming slightly differing forms according to the dialects of the various provinces of France from which the colonists had originally come, as "guillouée," "la guilloua," and "aguilauleu." Troops of children preceded the procession shouting "La iguolée qui vient." When the Iguoleux reached the house they beat time upon the door with long sticks as they shouted the chorus, but they never entered until the master or mistress or their representatives invited them to partake of hospitality. The invitation being accepted, compliments of the season were exchanged, and the charitable donations were placed in a bag destined for that purpose. In begging for the poor, request was always made for a chine of pork with the tail attached, called "l'échignée," or "la chignée." In high good humour, the party, heralded by shouting children and barking dogs, then started for the next house. "Nous prendrons la fille aînée" is thought to be an allusion to the human sacrifices offered by the Druids.

The devil plays a prominent part in the legendary lore of French Canada, but he does not appear as Lucifer, the star of the morning, the strong angel who fell through pride, but as the devil of monkish legend, a crafty and material being. The grotesque and comic elements are very apparent in his composition. His malice can be guarded against by simple means, as the sign of the cross, or calling upon Heaven or the Virgin will effectually banish the fiend.

In the rural districts of Canada, Satan's company may be confidently expected on all occasions. The presence of a little child in the room betrays the appearance of his Satanic Majesty, as the little innocent is sure to bewail itself vigorously. He may be met at a dance in the guise of a handsome young man who excels all the rustic gallants in appearance. He wears gloves to conceal his claws; and, disregarding the trammels of conventionality, keeps his hat on his head to hide his horns. He selects the prettiest girl as his partner; but his choice usually falls upon a coquette who, by dancing during Lent, or indulgence in frivolous vanity, has exposed herself to temptation. In the midst of the gaiety a strong odour of brimstone becomes perceptible, a piercing cry is heard, the attractive cavalier is abruptly wafted out of the window, carrying with him some useful domestic article, as the frying-pan or even the stove. If the girl should happen to wear a cross or a scapulary, she may escape with the scratch of a sharp claw. Canadian rustics never answer "entrez" when a knock is heard at the door; they invariably respond "ouvrez." This is founded upon an old legend of a young woman who replied "entrez" to such a summons, when the devil came in and carried her off.

When a priest is sent for to attend the sick, the devil is stimulated to his most lively activity, for then it is a question of the loss or gain of a soul. On such occasions a variety of the most unforeseen accidents are sure to happen. Prudent persons guard against such contingencies. Notwithstanding his zeal and versatility, Satan is often outwitted by mortals, though his subtle devices show discrimination and knowledge of character.

The wehr-wolf legend constitutes one of the worst of the traditional beliefs in French Canada. It is thought that one who falls for seven years to partake of the communion will be turned into a "loup-garou." The "loup-garou" may appropriate the form of a hare, a fox, a wild cat, or even a

black hen. Endowed with supernatural speed and strength, he roams at night through woods and desert places. A fierce creature, with appetites exaggerating those of the animal he resembles, his chief delight is in devouring little children. In order to regain his estate of lost humanity, it was necessary that the monster's blood should be shed; this kindly office being usually performed by a friend, a complete restoration was certain to follow the operation.

The Wandering Jew legend in various forms is popular in Canada. The souls of the lost and the spirits in purgatory occupy a prominent position in Canadian folklore. These haunting spirits are often supposed to return to the world, and are frequently detained on the scene of their past misdeeds in punishment for sin. A wrong could only be righted by the intervention of a living being. The evil spirits were unable to cross the blessed waters of the St. Lawrence without the help of a Christian.

The Aurora Borealis, called "*les marionnettes*, *les éclairs*, *les lustrions*," are believed to be lost souls. The Canadians think that the sound of an instrument, or the sound of the human voice raised in song, will make "*les éclairs*" dance. It is a common habit for the country people to sing aloud, to keep away the evil spirits. Dire misfortune threatens the reckless being who adopts this method of amusing himself while the quivering lights flash across the sky. Unless the precaution of touching him with a consecrated palm is taken, he gradually becomes fascinated, loses control of his senses, and before morning dawns, his body lies stiff and stark in death, while his soul is wafted away to join in the giddy whirl of the "*marionnettes*."

Fireflies, known to the country people as "*fi-follets*," are also supposed to be the souls of the lost. It is their prerogative to lead their followers to destruction. A simple charm will avert the malicious designs of these imps. If the object of their persecution can retain sufficient presence of mind to thrust either a needle or a sharp knife into the nearest fence, the firefly is obliged to stop short in his course. One of two things must then happen, either the will-o'-the-wisp will impale himself upon the sharp instrument and thus find deliverance, or else he will exhaust himself in frantic efforts to pass through the needle's eye, an achievement as difficult to the airy spirit as to the most

substantial of mortals. In the meantime the traveller can seek shelter.

The "Lutin" is a tricky sprite, delighting in mischief. He turns the cream sour, throws things into disorder, and at night takes long rides on the farmer's best horses. A remedy for this exists. Lutin possesses orderly instincts, and is forced to leave everything exactly as he finds it. If the farmer scatters a quart of bran before the stable door, the intruder in entering will be forced to step upon the bran, and the pressure of his footsteps will disarrange the grains. In scrupulous fulfilment of his obligation he must replace them one by one. While he is engaged in this tedious task the night passes, and when morning dawns Lutin is obliged to disappear.

The Canadian seafaring population entertain superstitions peculiar to themselves. There are certain fishes which the fisherfolk never touch, as for instance a kind of haddock, commonly called "Saint Peter's Fish," which legend declares was the first fish taken out of the net by the Apostle on the occasion of the miraculous draught of fishes. The back of the fish is said to bear, in black marks, the imprint of Saint Peter's fingers.

Canadian sailors professed to hear the plaintive accents of the spirit that bewailed itself in the vicinity of Cap Madeleine. For many years mysterious sounds were said to haunt Prince Edward's Island. Sighs that rent asunder the heart, plaints that deeply moved the soul, sung by voices that had nothing human in them, were heard in Roman Catholic chapels during service. Some heard nothing, while others were affected to tears and faintness by this torrent of melody vibrating in tender modulations and beating against the rock, until it became lost in distant echoes. Many attempts to exorcise these uneasy spirits were made without success. The fishermen tell of weird flames which are seen dancing on the waves of the Baie de Châteaus, and which they believe serve as a reminder to pray for the souls of those who have perished on that spot.

Sailors are firmly convinced that Admiral Walker, with his phantom fleet, appears in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. L'Amiral du Brouillard, or Admiral of the Fog, he is called. The sight always presages disaster for mariners; and many terrible shipwrecks that have taken place at Ile aux Œufs are believed to have been caused by this ghastly spectacle. The sea may be

smooth as a mirror. Suddenly the water becomes agitated, the waves rise mountains high. Then a vessel appears, vainly striving to make way against the raging billows. She is crowded by men in ancient uniforms. On the main deck stands the commanding officer, who points out the sombre heights of Cape Despair to the pilot; while a beautiful woman, distraught with terror, clings to his arm. The ship drives straight on to Cape Despair. Piercing cries are heard mingling with the noise of the tempest. Glimpses of white, agonised faces; of upraised, pleading hands; flash from the angry waters. Then, abruptly, the vision vanishes. The sunshine dimples on a sea like a mirror, the waves ripple softly to the foot of Cape Despair.

A belief in mermaids is very general. In 1725 the pilot of a French ship called the "*Marie de Grace*," in an affidavit signed by the captain of the same vessel, swore to having seen a mermaid off the Banks of Newfoundland. In 1782 Venant St. Germain of Repentigny, merchant and voyageur, swore before Judges Paquet and Ogden of the King's Bench, Montreal, to having seen a mermaid in Lake Superior. Returning from Michillimackinac to the Grand Portage, this trader arrived at the south end of the Pâté. A little before sunset, the evening being clear and fine, the deponent was returning from setting his nets. He perceived in the lake an animal the upper part of whose body resembled that of a human being. It was about the size of a seven-year-old child; the complexion was of a brownish hue, like that of a young negro; it had woolly hair. St. Germain, with three men who accompanied him and an old Indian woman to whom he had given a passage in his canoe, all examined this apparition attentively. The Canadian wished to obtain possession of this strange being, but the violent opposition of the old Indian woman prevented him from raising his gun, and the creature disappeared. The woman was indignant at his audacity in attempting to fire upon what she termed Manitou Nabilig Nabals, the God of the Waters and Lakes, who could raise a tempest at any moment, and expressed her determination to fly the danger. The voyageur remained in his own camp. Two hours later a violent storm arose, which continued with unabated fury for three days. Many other voyageurs had seen the same apparition. It was the general belief among the Indian tribes that this island was the residence of the God of the Waters and Lakes.

The superstitious Canadian, believing himself to be in constant contention with evil influences, did not disdain to become himself the worker of magic spells; he believed sincerely in necromancy and magic, and made attempts to practise the black art. Most of the spells and charms in use among the Canadians were taken from "*Le Petit Albert*," a small edition of "*Albert-le-Grand*" as used in France. The chief objects in employing these incantations was to find concealed treasures, changing tin into silver, the conjuring of spirits from the other world; it was also attempted to control the devil.

CIRCULATING LIBRARIES.

VARIOUS hard things have been said of the circulating library system, and not without reason, perhaps; but surely the circulating library is justified of its subscribers. It is said that the growth of lending libraries tends to check the sale of books, and to encourage the circulation of a very inferior class of literature. The former charge is rather an imaginary one, for it is quite certain that in many cases the libraries tend to encourage rather than restrict the buying of books. Many subscribers borrow books that they could not afford to buy, and would certainly never dream of buying even were they unattainable through the libraries. The sale of some books may be slightly affected by the preference of so many readers for borrowing rather than buying; but against this might be set many considerations on the other side. On the whole it is very doubtful whether the library system does in any appreciable degree affect the purchase of books.

As to the circulation of a very inferior class of literature, it must be admitted that in this charge there is a considerable amount of truth. Many novels, for example, have no circulation at all save through the libraries. No one buys them, but they are useful in filling the library boxes—especially for country subscribers—and it is to be presumed that they get read occasionally. Were there no libraries such books would never be published at all; or, if printed, would drop still-born from the press, greatly to the gain of literature. But while admitting that the great lending libraries do put a good deal of rubbish into circulation, it must be remembered that they have fostered, and

indeed created, a taste for reading in many quarters where books were but little known. The reading may be ill-directed, but it is at least better than no reading at all; and, the habit once formed, there is always the hope that the reader may find his way to the real pastures-grounds of literature, where genuine nutriment may be found and enjoyed.

The circulating library is practically the growth of modern times. It has been pointed out, it is true, that one Saint Pamphilus, Presbyter of Cæsarea, who died in the year 309, founded a library there which is said to have contained thirty thousand volumes, and that this collection, consisting of religious works, was made for the purpose of lending the books to religiously disposed people. Saint Jerome particularly mentions the lending of the books as the chief purpose of the library. But excepting this Cæsarean collection, there is no trace of a library in any way resembling the present day circulating library until we come to the seventeenth century.

The first germs of the present system may be found in the practice—not altogether unknown to mediæval “stationers”—introduced by one or two booksellers, of lending their wares to be read. From time immemorial booksellers’ shops have been the favourite resort of all touched with the love of letters; and in days gone by, when the art of advertising was practically unknown, it was only by frequenting the shops where books were sold that possible purchasers were able to learn what was going on in the publishing world, to know what new books were in course of publication, and to hear and exchange the latest literary gossip. These early book-lovers, one may be quite sure, would be certain to while away many a leisure hour by “sampling” the wares on their hosts’ counters, and would read, or at least dip into many volumes besides those they actually purchased for more leisurely consumption at home. And hence might arise, very naturally, the custom of formally lending out books to read for a monetary consideration.

Thus, at the end of Kirkman’s “Thracian Wonder,” published in 1661, the bookseller makes the following announcement: “If any gentlemen please to repair to my house aforesaid, they may be furnished with all manner of English or French histories, romances, or poetry, which are to be sold or read for reasonable consideration.” It is not quite clear from the last

few words whether the books might be taken away to be read, or whether the reading was to be done in the bookseller’s shop. But that books might be taken home is evident from the remark of a character in Neville’s “Poor Scholar,” printed in 1662. “Step to a bookseller’s,” he says, “and give him this angel, which I’ll lend you, for the use of the many-languaged bibles lately publish’t, for a week. Their price is twelve pound. When you have got them to your study, invite your father to your chamber, show him your library, and tell him you are twelve pounds out of purse for those large volumes.” This was an ingenious way of getting round the “relieving officer,” but it is doubtful, after all, whether the lending system was put into practice to any great extent.

Mr. Pepys, however, took advantage of it. After selling in disgust the copy he had first purchased of Butler’s “Hudibras,” he wished to make another attempt to read the book which every one else was praising, and, being thriftily unwilling to buy another copy until he had had an opportunity of making himself better acquainted with its contents, he went to St. Paul’s Churchyard, which was then fairly crowded with book-shops, and there looked upon the second part of “Hudibras,” which, he says, “I buy not, but borrow to read, to see if it be as good as the first, which the world cried so mightily up, though it hath not a good liking in me, though I had tried but twice or three times reading to bring myself to think it witty.” The renewed attempt at an appreciation of the book seems to have been a little more successful than the earlier readings, for in less than a fortnight Mr. Pepys paid another visit to his bookseller’s, and bought, with several more serious works, both parts of “Hudibras”—“the book now in greatest fashion for drollery”—although he naively confessed that he still found it hard to see where the wit lay.

There are no further traces of a circulating library of any kind until we reach the next century, in the course of which the modern system was introduced into all the chief towns of the kingdom. One of the very first circulating libraries established in Great Britain was set up by Allan Ramsay in 1725 at Edinburgh, a city which has always been in the van of intellectual progress. Plays and works of fiction seem to have formed the staple of Ramsay’s collection, and the circulation of so much “light” literature gave great

offence to some of the severer citizens, who stirred up the magistrates to make an attempt to suppress the new institution. Happily the foolish attempt at interference failed, and Allan Ramsay's library continued in active operation, through several changes of proprietorship, until in 1831 it was sold and dispersed.

London was slow in following Edinburgh. Benjamin Franklin particularly mentions in his "Autobiography" that during his early residence in the English capital, about 1720-1725, circulating libraries were unknown, and he describes how a bookseller, who possessed a very extensive stock, allowed him—"for a reasonable retribution"—to have access to his shelves, and to borrow whatever books he wished to read. The first regular circulating library in London was established in 1740, at number one hundred and thirty-two, Strand, by a bookseller named Wright, who was succeeded in turn by Messrs. Batho, John Bell, and Cawthorn, the grandfather of the proprietor of the present "British Library," conducted by Messrs. Cawthorn and Hutt, in Cockspur Street, Charing Cross. The library was removed to its present premises about the year 1800, when its old headquarters in the Strand were wanted for the approach to the Regent—afterwards Waterloo—Bridge. Wright's enterprise was soon imitated, for in 1742 one Simon Fancourt issued "Proposals for erecting a Public Circulating Library in London," with himself as librarian; and Fancourt was followed by many others. From 1754 to 1774 the Society of Arts met over a circulating library in Crane Court, Fleet Street.

The other large towns of the kingdom were not slow in introducing the new system, although many of the country libraries were small. An essayist in the "Annual Register" for 1761 remarks: "The reading female hires her novels from some country circulating library which consists of about a hundred volumes." The ordinary "reading female" would soon exhaust this limited amount of provender. It was a common gibe against circulating libraries that their principal customers were women. In "The Rivals"—1775—Sheridan makes Sir Anthony Absolute say to Mrs. Malaprop: "Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge!" and certainly the books that Miss Lydia had to hide so hastily—leaves just plucked from the particular tree which

supplied the ladies of Bath—were not all of the most innocent character.

One of the first of the provincial circulating libraries was established at Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1746; and five years later one was opened at Birmingham by William Hutton, afterwards the historian of that town. In his "Autobiography" Hutton says: "I was the first who opened a circulating library in Birmingham, in 1751, since which time many have started in the race." He, too, has a word for the ladies; for he says: "As I hired out books, the fair sex did not neglect the shop. Some of them were so obliging as to show an inclination to share with me the troubles of the world." After Birmingham came Manchester, where a circulating library was established about 1757, and in the following year Liverpool followed suit. The latter, known in later days as the "Liverpool (Proprietary) Library," was accustomed for many years to style itself, in annual reports and other documents, the "oldest circulating library in Europe"; but from what has been stated above, it is clear that this claim was without foundation in fact.

This Liverpool library was begun by a small club of men taking in the "Monthly Review" to read. This led to the purchase of other books and periodicals, and so to the foundation of a regular circulating library. Its first catalogue was issued in November, 1758, when it contained four hundred and fifty volumes, and was able to boast the support of one hundred and nine subscribers at five shillings each. The Rochdale Library was founded in 1770, and ten years later we hear of a very large one at Exeter, but the exact date of its establishment is unknown. By this time lending libraries were too common to be remarked, and all over the kingdom they were doing good service in enlarging the reading class, and creating a more general interest in literature.

The London Library was founded in 1840, and is now one of the finest and choicest collections in the world. Two years later Mr. Mudie established the subscription library that has made his name famous all over the world. There are many other large circulating libraries in London and the provinces, but Mudie's remains the largest. Every year it circulates an enormous number of books, and supplies the wants of a vast army of readers, both in town and country. Books may come and books may go, but Mudie's bids fair to go on for ever.

BEN MA CHREE.

A BOAT to see the caves, sir? Just step round.
Beside the breakwater the steps are free.
Oh, yes, I know the currents of the Sound,
And the queer humours of the Irish Sea.
I've learnt each reef and sunken rock to trace,
And studied them, these three-score years and more,
Long ere folk talked about our little place,
Or foot of stranger trod Port Erin's shore.

Yonder is Bradda Head. The little hut,
Hanging upon it like a puffin's nest,
Was built before the great lead mine was shut.
See, where the heather purples all the crest
Of the steep cliff; and yon great cave below,
Where the blue waves lie like an inland lake,
Has it a name, you say? A tale we know,
We old men, for the notes you want to make?

Oh, ay, there's not a nook about the coast,
Not a rock frowning o'er the clear green waves,
But has its story, or its name to boast;
The smugglers used to use the deepest caves;
And that—where shipwrecked men might gain the
ledge,

At highest washing of the wildest sea,
Clinging to the sharp flint stones at the edge—
We call it still "the grave of Ben ma Chree."

Well, I will tell the tale as best I may,
If you will steer her till I get a light;
Straight out, sir, till she fetches Fishwick Bay.
You want to land there, if I heard you right?
'Twill be, let's see, some eighty years ago,
Since all men whispered, ay, and talked out free,
Of the bold smuggler captain, daring Joe,
Who called his raking craft "the Ben ma Chree."

That's Manx, you know, for "woman of my heart,"
And Joe, who loved naught else but boat and wife,
Called them alike, and scarce the two could part,
Giving them all of his hot soul and life.
He'd fight the strongest cutter for his craft,
He'd spend his richest gains to deck his lass;
And if she asked "which best?" he kissed and
laughed,
And to one name tossed off his brimming glass.

One night, a wild and squally winter's night,
Joe had a rich and daring venture on;
The surf around the Chicken surging white,
The whole air thrilling with its ominous moan.
"The better for my Ben ma Chree," Joe swore;
"The cutter's dainty captain bides at home,
Safe at St. Mary's; we can catch ashore,
Between the Stack and yon long line of foam."

Bold as he was, he would not fling away
Cargo or craft, for lack of watch or tide;
Deep need for one to watch St. Mary's Bay,
Where the King's cutter at her moorings rode.
Each man was needed for the sloop, each man
Was known too well a sentinel to be.
"But what we fail to do, a woman can,
Such a brave woman as my Ben ma Chree."

"Watch them, my girl, for me," said Captain Joe;
"If they weigh anchor ere our work is done,
Light up our beacon with its ruddy glow
High up on Bradda. Give us time to run.
For if she shows her heels, there's not a ship
Among the King's to catch her. You've the wit,
Through all the closest guard they set to slip,
I'll trust my life and venture both to it."

And the night darkened. As the tale is told,
A traitor, Joe in courting days had crossed,
His plans to the King's men that day had sold;
A traitor, who knew all the perilous coast.
And Mary, by the ways that women have,
Heard of the treachery, saw the desperate need,
And knew that husband, cargo, craft, to save,
She must give all she had, of strength and speed.

Over the mountain path her flying feet
Carried her swiftly—up to Bradda Head,
Where the great waves in angry thunder beat,
To light the warning beacon blaze she sped;
Who, with a mocking demon in his eye,
Sprang out to stop her on her dizzy path?
He, whose old passion, sunk to treachery,
Had sold her wedded love to chains or death.

"Whither so fast?" he said, and laughed and seized
The struggling hands in his relentless grasp.
"You've done too long what you trapped robber
pleased,

Hear my words now, yield to my loving clasp.
We need no blaze, my pretty one, to see.
While the Hawk swoops upon her prey down there;
The net is strong around the Ben ma Chree,
And her doomed master sees no warning flare."

Vain were her frantic prayers, her struggles vain,
As strong as merciless her ruffian foe;
Her wild cry wailed, unheard, across the main,
Where fearless went the work of Captain Joe.
No quick flame reddened from the beetling moor,
Silent the cutter stole across the waves,
While bale and runlet, hove upon the shore,
Were piling fast and deep in rocky caves.

Sudden she ceased her panting, piteous plea;
Sudden her little hands relaxed their strife;
Her wild eyes softened, shyly, tenderly.
Could that meek beauty be the skipper's wife,
Who looked up smiling at his traitor then,
Who on his shoulder bent her golden head?
"You know the secret, rarely guessed by men,
We women love our masters," Mary said.

Long afterwards, his ravings in his hands
Told how she promised—would he let her go
To set a light to all those ready brands,
As a last service done to Captain Joe—
That she would leave him, leave him for his sake,
And fly with him, far from the little isle;
And—said the double traitor—"as she spoke
She gave me sealing kiss and radiant smile."

Together they two gained the dizzy height,
Together lit the bracken on the heath,
Together heard the clamour at the sight,
Together watched the hurried stir beneath;
Saw, as the cutter rounded by the Calf,
The sloop glide swiftly o'er the darkening sea;
Heard Captain Joe, with a triumphant laugh,
Shout his "all well" up to his Ben ma Chree.

"And," raved the wretch, "e'en as I turned to claim
Reward for all that I had staked and lost,
With a wild cry on his—his hated name,
A wild, shrill cry, that rang along the coast,
She darted from my clasping arms to spring
To the steep crag that juts above the sea.
I strove to catch her garments fluttering,
A flash, a shriek, and where was Ben ma Chree?"

Next day, when in and out the mighty cave
The waters washed and gurgled at their will,
Floating upon the green, translucent wave,
Her blue eyes closed, her red lips sweet and still,
With golden hair that, lifelike, seemed to move
With the long, heaving swell that made her bed,
They found the woman who had died for love
Drifting upon the tide that bore her—dead.

From the wretch crouched amid the purple heather,
Gibbering his bitter story o'er and o'er,
With his cold fingers fiercely clenched together
Over a fragment of the dress she wore,
They gathered all that she had dared and done,
And knew that rescue or revenge were nought;
For him—his lifelong punishment begun,
And she—had paid the price of what she bought.

Joe seemed to take the story quiet like,
When he came joyous back to hear it all.
They say that men the sudden death-shots strike
Stand straight and still a moment ere they fall;

He stood and heard the madman's frantic tale ;
He stood beside her grave at Craigneesh there,
With blazing eyes, and lips tight set and pale,
And passed away, alone in his despair.

Alone, best let a man alone with death.
I say his friends were right who let him pass.
What words of comfort are but wasted breath ?
Well, it's all long ago, and so it was.
He strode down to yon far quayside next day,
Where at her anchor swung the Ben ma Chree,
Leapt aboard of her, waved his mates away,
Set sail, took helm, and bore away to sea.

Not far ; the watchers saw him ratching back,
And wondered what the stricken man would do ;
He made the cavern with his last short tack,
And to its hidden depths the cutter flew ;
And in a little while they saw Joe swim
Out from its shadow, gain the further shore,
And make for Craigneesh. As they looked at him,
Up from the cavern rose a sullen roar,

And smoke came eddying thickly from its mouth.
Not long before the fishers got afloat.
They found rent spars and rigging drifting south ;
They found the wreckage of the gallant boat,
Never to run a precious cargo more,
Never her turn of speed again to show.
One in the blue sea, one beneath the moor,
Slept the two sister loves of Captain Joe.

He died, a grave, stern man, still in his prime.
They say none ever saw him smile in life ;
He did in death, when 'neath the budding thyme
They laid him, blessed at last, beside his wife ;
But still, when fishing where the callies lie,
Below the rocks, where roughest frets the sea,
Where the great granite arch stands steadfastly,
The old men point " the grave of Ben ma Chree."

A SIMPLE SOLUTION.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

HE had met her face to face in an Eastern bazaar ; he had passed her in a sleigh as they drove, muffled in furs, through the principal street of Irkutsk ; he had strayed across her searching for treasures in an old curiosity shop in Rome ; and now they met, once more, on the downs of an English coast, as if the whole world were not wide enough to keep their different ways asunder—they who had wrenched their lives apart as completely as if no vow nor tie had ever bound them. Certainly, when he had come to this little bay, called St. Margaret's, girt in by the great white cliffs from the bustle and unrest of the world outside, he would have said that this was the very last place in which he would have expected to meet this wayward, wilful, restless woman, who had been his wife till they had so wearied and chafed each other that their bonds had become intolerable. So they had parted, she going her way and he his. There were no children. Their only child had died a few months old, and so, as it seemed to them,

there was nothing to force them to keep up the appearance of union between them.

This afternoon, as he came over the downs from the lighthouses, and saw her, a red-cloaked figure against the background of snowy landscape, a savage exclamation broke from him. She passed him, careless, indifferent as always, apparently not even seeing him, though at the moment he and she were the only human figures visible on that wide waste of snow-covered downs.

He went down towards the Bay, where he was staying, his first impulse being to pack up and return to town again. But by the time he had reached the hotel he had changed his mind. Why should he run away from her ? Why should he let her presence goad him into flying this place, as he had done all the others where he had met her ?

Town was disgusting at the present moment—dense with fog. Here the sun was shining, and the skies were blue. He was very comfortable in his quarters ; the dinners were excellent, the attention perfect. There was good fishing to be had, and there were some nice people in the house, who made time pass quickly—one or two pleasant men from town who could play a good game of billiards, and some pretty girls.

Yes ; he was very comfortable where he was, and he certainly should not leave the place just because one of her confounded caprices had driven her into the same neighbourhood.

After dinner that evening he went into the drawing-room. He had fallen during the past week into the habit of doing so. When he first came he had spent his evenings chiefly between the billiard and smoking-rooms. The principal of the establishment, a handsome, kind-eyed woman, looked up with a little significant smile at another woman sitting near. But for once Carleton did not make his way to the side of the prettiest girl staying in the house. She was at this moment sitting reading, or pretending to read, near the fire. He sat down by the principal, and after a while asked her a question about the lady he had met on the downs that afternoon.

" The Red Lady ? We call her that because she seems so fond of the colour. Her name is the same as yours—Carleton. She came here in the autumn and took one of the bungalows on the cliffs. I think she must find it rather dull—people don't call, you know—"

Miss Carlisle stopped, colouring slightly. " Why ? " asked Carleton.

"Oh, I don't know. There is a little mystery about her." She told the Vicar when she came that she was separated from her husband, but gave no reason."

"I wonder she didn't keep that piece of information to herself," said Carleton grimly.

"She might have said he was in—India or Kamschatka," said a bright, pretty widow, who for some feminine reason of her own did not care for Carleton.

"If a woman chooses to flaunt in the eyes of the world that she has no lawful guardian or protector, she must not be surprised at receiving some of its stones. The world is a cowardly bully, at the best," he said bitterly.

He himself never mentioned the fact that he was a married man. It opened up painful questions and surmises, and he did not feel inclined to be in a perpetual state of explanation to his fellow-creatures. Besides, as he lived as a bachelor, it was more convenient to be known as one.

He rose and walked over to the side of the pretty girl by the fireside. She was staying at the hotel with her mother, the lady between whom and Miss Carlisle had passed that smiling, amused glance.

She was a good little girl, docile and obedient, who thought as her mother told her, and whose present filial obedience suggested that willingness to be ruled later by her husband which Saint Paul lays down as the lawful attitude of the minds of wives towards their husbands. She would never expect to be treated on that absurd footing of intellectual and moral equality. She would never question the laws laid down for her guidance by her husband, nor show herself a distinct original personality, who failed to see that there should be one rule for the guidance of her husband's life, and another for her own.

As he looked into the flushing, delicate face, the lovely eyes raised with a smile to his, he thought that the husband who won her would be a happy man. What had possessed him to marry a clever woman? And he turned with a sense of restful refreshment to the girl beside him, whose ignorant and unintelligent mind was clad in such perfect physical beauty.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning he and Miss Hurst strolled off together down the bay. He talked, and she listened. She seemed absorbed in all that he said. She had never had such an admirer as this before; so hand-

some, so clever, and bearing so unmis- takeably in his manner and air, the stamp of a social world far above her own. For her father, now dead, had made his fortune as a linen-draper in Clapham, and it was Nature, not birth, that had given her and her mother the refinement they possessed. As she walked she listened to his voice rather than to his words, but she always managed to smile or nod in the right place, and looked distractingly pretty through it all.

It was a glorious morning. A rapid thaw had set in during the night, and the air was sunny and balmy as spring.

A tangle of seaweed left by the line of ebbing tide filled the air with salt, sweet sea-scents. Miss Hurst amused herself by gathering up the stranded sprays as they caught her fancy: crimson, yellow-tinted, sponges; deadman's fingers; and mermaid's purses. They passed the groyne and continued their walk along the beach. The tide was out, leaving bare chalk and rock between which gurgled up fresh-water streams flowing out to sea, and carrying with them myriads of tiny shells. The grey crows and the sea-gulls swooped down on seaweed-covered rocks and sunlit sea in search of food, careless of the presence of the two human beings strolling side by side on the beach.

"They say they can find some very rare sort of shell here sometimes in those fresh-water springs," said Miss Hurst.

"Cowries do you mean?"

"Yes. A man showed me one. He was quite pleased at having found it. I thought it was a very common little shell. I have seen heaps of them. A cousin of mine brought a lot from some place abroad."

She looked so pretty, as the sea-breezes ruffled her hair, and the sunshine lighted her eyes, that Carleton did not think it at all necessary to explain that her speech itself expressed the strangeness of such shells being found in this English bay.

"The man who found the cowrie used to spend hours poking in the old beach up there, hunting for fossils. But I tell you what I should love to find: a piece of amber. I have looked for some every day since I came."

"We must walk along the high-water mark," he said, smiling. "Let us go on a little farther and look."

Suddenly something in the drift of seaweed caught his eye. It was a fair-sized piece of amber. He picked it up, and gave it to her.

She was delighted with it, and profuse in her thanks. He could not help contrasting her with that other woman, who, if she had set her heart on finding a piece of amber, would not have been satisfied with her husband finding it for her. She would probably have gone on searching till she had found another piece herself. It was only a trifling thing, but it was typical of every act of her life.

"Suppose we go up and poke about in the old beach," said Miss Hurst, laughing. "We might find some fossils too."

She turned towards the cliff, but he stopped her. It was dangerous to walk under it after the hard frost. There might be a fall at any moment.

"What nonsense!" she said, with coquettish petulance. "I often walk close under them and nothing ever falls!"

"I would rather you didn't go!" he said earnestly. "Suppose anything did happen——"

His eyes said more than he knew, for she blushed scarlet, and turned away quickly, looking seawards but seeing nothing, for her eyes were dazed with a frightened gladness that had leaped into them.

He had caught a glimpse of it, and its light shone straight down into the heart whose workings he had wilfully kept dark even from himself, and he knew that it was full of the thought of this girl; that she was the one woman he desired—and she cared for him!

He looked away, dumb, stricken, confused, with a mingled sense of triumph and sickening despair. He looked up the beach towards the cliffs, from whose peril he had carefully shielded her—and saw his wife.

About a year before there had been a fall of the chalk near to where they were standing. Some of the fallen blocks lay piled up at the foot of the cliff. Sitting on the old beach just beyond the fall, which had till that moment screened her from them, was his wife, a vivid, distinct figure in her red cap and cloak against the whiteness of the cliff. She leant back, asleep apparently, for her eyes were closed. The sunlight fell full on her face, lighting it up clearly to him. Even where he stood, every sign showing the passing of time was fully seen. The round freshness of youth had vanished; the skin was sallow; the brow faintly lined with the mental activity of which he had so disapproved; and the lips were compressed and pale, as if with physical suffering. He had thought her handsome once, with a refined, intelligent

beauty. But in his eyes there was no beauty left, and the woman by his side was young, lovely, and to be loved!

A rage of fierce hate swept over him. At the same instant there was a muffled sound. A few pieces of chalk slipping from the face of the cliff broke themselves to pieces on one of the larger boulders at the foot, without waking the sleeping woman. He saw and understood, with that mad, desperate despair and hate tearing all the while at his heartstrings. The whole scene was over in an instant.

"What was that?" asked Miss Hurst, turning; but before she could see the sleeping, unconscious figure, Carleton had caught her round the waist, and was half dragging, half carrying her down the beach, towards the sea. A moment later there came a thundering, crashing roar of falling cliff, as the chalk, cracked by the frost, slid suddenly downwards, covering the pile that lay already heaped up at its foot, and rolling in great boulders that shivered and crumbled into innumerable fragments down the beach, almost overtaking the flying figures. But, though they were struck by some of the scattering fragments, they had time to reach a place of safety.

When Carleton, with Miss Hurst, breathless, exhausted with the race across the heavy shingle, clinging half-crying to his arm, looked back, he saw only tons of riven boulders piled up at the foot of the cliff, while the air was dim with the dust of the chalk crushed into powder by the weight of its own fall.

There was no other sight nor sound.

The red-cloaked figure had vanished from the scene—and from his life.

CHAPTER III.

No one saw him again for the rest of the day at the hotel under the cliff. He left the Bay in the afternoon without a word of farewell to any one.

He wandered up and down on the face of the earth, for more than a year.

Then suddenly, driven by the spirit that left him no peace night or day, he returned to England. When he reached England the same inexorable goading sent him down to St. Margaret's Bay. It was winter when he had last seen it; now, it was spring. Easter had fallen late that year, and, the weather being perfect, the hotel was crowded with visitors.

The principal was glad to see him, for he had been a favourite with her; but there was disapproval in the sweet honesty

of her eyes, and he knew that it referred to his treatment of Miss Hurst. His abrupt departure must have seemed unjustifiable, after his conduct towards her. The memory of the girl-love he had so treacherously won, had been one of the black shadows that had dogged his path ever since.

Amongst the visitors he found several men he knew. The house was full of gaiety, the men were sociable, and the women gracious and willing to be amused. The English comfort and homeliness of the place was a luxury after the rough wanderings through which he had come. But there was no rest nor ease for him. The presence that had gone ever by his side, under burning suns in distant lands; in camps where men laid down to sleep at night with the chance of being frozen to death before the morning; in lonely far-off spots, where day and night watch was kept against treacherous savage foes, and the stealthy, cruel approach of wild beasts; in the sunshine, under the starlight, in heat and cold, alone, or in the company of his fellow-creatures, through all that time that presence had gone with him, invisible to all eyes, but ever awfully real to his consciousness: the figure of his wife as he had last seen her—wearied, helpless, unwarned, under that terrible cliff.

If he had felt its haunting, invisible shadow before in those strange, unaccustomed scenes, where life went hand-in-hand with death, and men's brains were always on the alert against some secret foe, it was ten times more terrible here.

What devil of torment had driven him back to the place? He asked himself that as he sat at dinner, with the murmur of voices and laughter round him; with the softly shaded lamps lighting up the dinner-tables; with the quick, noiseless service of the waiters; with all the familiar, prosaic details of every-day life, which, perhaps, form one of the most intolerable elements in a great crime, falling on the remorse-haunted soul like the ironical laughter of jesting demons.

The dinner came to an end. The buzz and the laughter, and the clatter of familiar noises grew more intolerable.

The visitors broke up into couples or groups, and wandered into the drawing-room or billiard-room, or out of doors to see the moon rising.

Carleton left the house and walked towards the groynes. The other visitors did not seem inclined to quit the bay itself.

He soon passed them all, and, once

beyond the breakwater, had the beach to himself. Even the voices died away, and there was only the roll of the loose shingle as his footsteps displaced it and the soft murmur of the incoming tide. The spring dusk grew luminous with moonlight.

He reached the fall of cliff lying still as he had last seen it. Then suddenly the invisible horror that had haunted his steps seemed to take bodily shape and presence. A few yards from him, a shadowy grey figure in the waxing moonlight, stood his wife. She was looking at him, her face pale, her eyes wide as if with a great wonder.

Was his brain really giving way at last under the pressure of that never-dying remorse?

"My God!" he cried, under his breath.

"So we are doomed to meet!"

It was a living voice—clear, mocking, and yet faintly tremulous as if with some powerfully suppressed feeling.

"You—are—alive; not——" he looked at the great fall of cliff, under which he had believed her to be lying, crushed out of life and all human shape; then at her again—still too dazed to believe.

"No—did you think me dead?" Then, with a kind of listless indifference: "You are sorry, I suppose."

"I thought you had been killed by——" he pointed at the fallen blocks near which they stood.

She looked too, a strange grimness tightening her lips.

"I was very nearly. I escaped only by a miracle, I suppose you would call it. I am afraid that it was a pity for you." Then the half-mocking indifference vanished into something like curiosity. "Why did you connect me with that fall when no one else did? I was asleep there, and was awakened by the crash of tons of chalk falling about me. I had no consciousness of anything till I found that I was alive. I had been sitting under a projecting piece of the cliff which, luckily for me, did not give way. When I found myself alive, and not even buried, I crept out before any one came, not wishing to be made the heroine of a little local adventure. No one knew—but——" she looked at him anxiously again.

He told her; he could no more have kept back the horrible story than he could have prevented his feet returning to the spot. There was a strange dead silence when he ended.

Then she spoke.

"You tried to—murder me," she said. "Did the bonds between us irk you so much as that?"

She stood staring at him, a sick and dreadful fear of him creeping into her eyes.

"It's—it's horrible," she said hoarsely; "too horrible to believe. To think that you and I should have come to that." A pause. Then she broke into a queer laugh. "To think that you and I, who were so calmly content with our intellectual liberty, our social training, should have come to that! Just like any vulgar, ignorant, passion-driven human beings out of the gutter! It would be quite—melodramatic—if it weren't so horrible!" and she shuddered from head to foot.

"Frances——" he began.

But she silenced him with a slight gesture, and turned away, still with that look of unspeakable fear of him on her face.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR a week, though he tried to do so, he saw nothing of her. Then he met her once more.

He had gone for a walk on the downs towards the lighthouses. He went there every day, remembering that it was there that he had first seen her. He was returning when he saw her again.

On the edge of the cliff, the chief part having been carried away by successive falls of the chalk, stood the foundations of an old guard-house, built at the time of the Napoleon panic. She was sitting on the ruins of one of the grass-covered walls.

She rose as he came up. She was very white, and there was an indescribable change in her which startled him as with a bewildering sense of unrecognition—as if he had never known her before.

"I have been thinking about it ever since I saw you," she said, in a tired voice. "I have gone over every step of our married life, from the day when we, with our hearts full of modern scepticism, vowed to stand by each other for better for worse, till the day when we broke those bonds so lightly and went our separate ways because we could see no reason why two persons, who no longer agreed nor loved, should go on living together when their very presence was irksome to each other. Marriage was only a human institution, and as such might be cast aside, when men and women were tired of it, or had outgrown it. And so, not believing in its moral obligations or sacred compulsion, we grew daily more careless of trying to please

each other. We pulled apart at our fetters, instead of trying to see whether we could not wear them more easily if we tried to keep step side by side; and then, when the straining became intolerable, we snapped them and went our separate ways. I have looked back over it all, and I see now that every selfish, wilful, careless step we took led steadily on to—that horrible ending."

"You know——" he said hoarsely.

He had not told her of that other love.

"I can guess," her pale face flamed. "But I gave you your freedom, I sent you into temptation."

That mad passion or infatuation of his for the younger and lovelier woman had been burnt dead out by the fire of the remorse that had tortured him through those long wanderings. Even its memory seemed unbearable as it came between him now and this other woman who was speaking.

"And you can forgive me! Ah!" with a sharp revulsion of feeling. "You are already beginning to take the duty you speak of as a factor in your life. But—can that bridge the gulf we have made between us?"

"We can try," she said, under her breath, "if you will."

The murmur of the returning tide came up from the beach below. A faint breeze, sweet with the breath of new spring grasses, stirred over the downs. The sun was passing westward to light up once more the darkness of a waiting world.

On all sides was a renewing, obedient to a law of Nature which commands that the old order should pass only that the new may obtain. Perhaps some such thought touched them, for suddenly a faint smile lighted their pale faces.

Perhaps the new and better love was already rising out of the old, which had once made them choose each other for better for worse, for he bent and they kissed each other.

THE ISLAND OF BARRA.

WE were kept for hours rolling at anchor in a fog just outside Barra's port of Castle Bay ere we could make acquaintance with the island. And when we left the island, after a few wet days' sojourn in it, we were caught in a furious gale from the south-west, which gave us such a pummelling as I, for one, shall never forget. These two experiences were quite typical. Here, on the extreme skirt of the Outer

Hebrides, one must not expect placid uniformity in the weather.

Barra, or Barray, as it used to be spelled, is less visited by tourists than the remote St. Kilda itself. The latter isle periodically during the summer sees boat-loads of inquisitive—and often very sea-sick—holiday-makers. They arrive in hundreds. To be sure they do not stay very long, for it would not do to be caught in an Atlantic storm in St. Kilda's unprotected little harbour. But, at any rate, the civilising influence of these travellers of passage must be taken into account. Barra, on the other hand, though some fifty miles nearer the mainland, is not used by the steamship agents as a lure for tourists. The mail packet calls there regularly, and in so far the isle has the pull over St. Kilda.

Sir Donald Monro, High Dean of the Isles, who made a tour of the Hebrides in 1549, has left us an interesting little report upon Barra. His estimate of its dimensions is fairly correct, "being seven myle in lenth from the S.W. to the N.E., and foure in breadthe from the S.E. to the N.W." But it is not by any means regular in its outline. The sea has driven extensive deep channels into its rocks; it has long, almost insulated headlands in its northern parts; and its archipelago of surrounding islets—the haunt of seals and gulls—tells of the time, long distant, no doubt, when these also were connected with it, making of it a main island of considerable size. It would be a tedious and rough day's walk to tramp the entire coast-line of little Barra; yet, in fine weather, a memorable one withal. Its great north-west bay, from Crean Head to Scurrial Point, has a sweep of about five miles of magnificent white sands, and back to back with it, facing the east, is another splendid sandy reach, the Traymore, or more commonly, the Cockle Bay. Sooner or later the Atlantic will force the sandy backbone of low hillocks which keeps the bays apart, and make Barra more regular in its configuration by giving it one more islet satellite in place of its extreme northern cape. At present, however, one may enjoy the most invigorating of blows on these superb sands. If you like cockles you may also have a surfet of them on this eastern bay. Sir Donald Monro was not unmindful of these dubious dainties. "This sand," he writes, "is full of grate cokilla. . . Ther is na fairer and more profitable sands for cokills in all the world." From the remains of the shells upon the

strand, one may conjecture that the islanders have for centuries allowed their appetites to bear strong witness to the truth of Sir Donald's words. Even now the handsome stout lady who keeps the little inn of Bayherivah, a mile to the south of the sands, will think her guest a man of taste if he requisition some cockles for his evening meal. One or other of her bare-legged children will, on demand, be only too happy to set out for the bay in quest of them.

This reference to an inn must not beguile the reader into thinking that there is sumptuous accommodation in Barra, as there is in other hotels in remote parts of the Highlands in the season. There is, indeed, an hotel in Castle Bay—and very good it is, considering where it is. You may rely upon tender mutton in it, and a sufficiency of fish. But as the number of visitors to the isle does not ordinarily reach eight or ten in the year, it were unreasonable to expect to enjoy here the fruits of the efforts of an accomplished "chef." It may happen, indeed, that not a single tourist sets foot on Barra in the twelvemonth. That explains, no doubt, why cigars are not to be bought in its stores any more than in its hotel. At Bayherivah an even worse misfortune than the dearth of cigars befell us. We ran out of tobacco, nor was there any in the inn, or in the pockets of the two or three men who visited the inn for gossip and ill-conditioned whisky. In our distress we quite disturbed the equanimity of our good landlady. She sent far and wide over North Barra on our behalf, and it was only after about a day that she could offer us rather less than a cubic inch of solid nicotine, which she had begged for us from the Roman Catholic priest of the district. Even of that we were mulcted in part, for the landlady's son, a boy of fifteen, had taken a surreptitious bite from it.

Inland, Barra is noteworthy for its heather-clad dells and its rocky heights. Heaval, the summit of its hills, is nearly thirteen hundred feet above sea-level, and connected with it are several other hills nearly as high. From Heaval's base a spacious reach of excellent grazing land slopes to the west, and one is at first surprised to see the number of horses, cattle, and sheep which here find pasture. At the seaward end of the incline are two or three knots of crofters' cottages of the old kind, in which two or three hundred human souls find a healthy, if—to the

tourist's eye—rather dismal abode. These crofters are not imbued with any of the notions of Malthus. It is quite startling to see the crowds of children that troop from the midst of the wigwams to gaze upon the apparition of a stranger. They are, without exception, bare-legged and brown. They are also somewhat free in the expressions of the criticisms and amusement a visitor occasions in them. It is hardly to be wondered at. The Japanese are much more at home with tourists than are these dwellers in Barra.

Sir Donald, three centuries and a half ago, termed Barra "ane fertill and fruitfull ile in cornea." He seems to have gone out of his way to pay the little land a high-flown compliment in this matter—at least if Barra may be judged on its present aspects. Doubtless, however, in the time of Edward the Sixth, more grain was grown here than now. Sheep rule the roost in Barra as elsewhere—together with deer—in the far north. The strips of rye and oats and barley, so cunningly embedded among the cottages by Castle Bay, do not look very happy, even after the sunlight of a phenomenal year. In an ordinary moist summer, one may fancy that it is here much as it is in the Faroes, where the betting is about even whether the corn can be got in before the autumnal storms are let loose upon the land. Of course, people in Barra who eat wheaten bread, do not rely upon their own little island for it. Both at Castle Bay and Bayherivah the white loaves we ate came from Glasgow. They did not, like wine and cheese, seem to have benefited by their sea voyage. But potatoes do well in the island undoubtedly. With these in abundance, and the generous sea always at hand with its fish, there need be no fear of starvation in Barra, even as there are few opportunities of acquiring wealth. Trees must not be expected in islands exposed to the salt winds and storms of the Atlantic. Yet on the east coast of Barra are two or three sheltered spots with thickets of alders crannied between the rocks, and cascades tumbling through their midst. In one of these, during our walks, we came upon a host of voluble starlings, who were making the most of their delightful discovery. At Bayherivah, our landlady one morning presented us with an apple as you or I might offer a fine amethyst to a friend. It was not at all a toothsome apple, but it had been grown in Barra—at least so the tradition ran, though subsequent minute

investigation north, south, east, and west failed to discover a genuine apple-tree.

The Barra crofters are interesting, even as their abodes are picturesque. Many of them combine the pursuits of the ordinary crofter with that of the herring in the great fisheries on the east coast of Scotland. They rely a good deal upon the money they hope to bring home when the first of the autumnal storms warns them of the approaching winter. With them go their wives, if these are tolerably young and capable. The visitor to the island during July or August soon remarks the absence of its young women. Those who are left are not too prepossessing. They bear almost too forcibly those indications of Spanish blood which have been noticed among the Hebrideans as well as in certain coast towns of Ireland. The Spanish woman in youth is engaging enough, but grown old, under stress of a rather rough outdoor life, she has few physical charms. It is the same with these women of Barra. They are athletic figures, seen about the precincts of their ramshackle thatched abodes, with their great hands in their great sides; but they are not figures to inspire a poet who draws his inspiration solely from the beautiful. Their husbands, if at home, seem to the casual observer noteworthy mainly for the comparative plenitude of their attire, and the ease with which they lounge against the eaves of their houses in an attitude of supreme nonchalance, looking as if they defied laird and law combined to turn them off their traditional croft. In their address, too, they are bravely independent. A fine coat does not compel respect from them. Among their real virtues may be mentioned a distinct measure of temperance—at least in later years. Of old they were too fond of whisky, and drank as much at funerals as the proverbial Irishman at a wake. But the priests have brought things to a better pass. The Barra man still goes to his last long home to the tune of the pipes, but his death does not involve a sequel of intoxications. From all accounts, it would, however, be as well if his grave were dug a little deeper than it generally is.

It is surprising to find that the majority of the Barra islanders are Catholics. This may or may not seem to buttress the idea that the people are of a southern and Catholic stock. More probably it goes to prove that the isle was neglected by the Protestant evangelisers of two or three centuries ago. Be that as it may, the

Roman Catholic church of Castle Bay is one of the most ornate religious buildings in the Western Isles. It stands on a conspicuous knoll, and competes for notice with the ruined castle on an islet in the harbour. This castle was referred to by Sir Donald Monro as "ane strenthey craige, callit Kiselnin, pertaining to McKneil of Barray." The McNells were for long lords of the isle. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century they even supplied other islands of the west with wives and husbands from their own domain. The like course might perhaps with advantage be followed in our own days; for certainly Barra has not for ages been so densely peopled as now. According to publicists, its population in 1764 was one thousand and ninety-seven. It is now reckoned at two thousand; and this, be it understood, though the land directly under cultivation is probably much less than it was a hundred years ago.

The visitor who comes to Barra caring little for sport will run some risk of finding his life dull. The walks and scrambles it offers to the fairly adventurous, though pleasant, cannot be varied very greatly in so small a land. True, the weather may be trusted to give considerable diversity to one's days. But to the pedestrian anxious to be afoot it will be a source of irritation rather than rapture to have a storm from the south-west succeeded by a storm from the north-east, and the latter in its turn followed by a day of all-obliterating mist, thick enough to discomfort even the enterprising Hebridean midges. With the angler, however, it is different. He enjoys the excitement of testing the effect of these weather changes upon the spirits and appetites of the trout.

Yet, truth to tell, though there are plenty of fish in the Barra lakes, they are not satisfying fish. The larger ones—and they run to three pounds weight—do not resist capture as behoves a well-bred trout, and the smaller share with their big brethren in a common stigma of coarseness. Of the latter there are no lack in the pool near the Bayherivah inn. It is an attractive lonely upland lake, girdled by a road which sees but little traffic, and with the crimson bloom of the heather brightening the hill-sides north and south. An artist would find endless material in its different bays, with the shaggy Highland cattle posing themselves against the characteristic background picturesquely, and perhaps aggressively. But he would do well to

come hither provided with a very large umbrella. Squalls blow up from the Atlantic hither with astonishing abruptness, and seem to love to lash Loch an Duin—or the Mill Loch—into a state of fury on very little provocation. There is, however, compensation in the deep blue of the sky afterwards, even though this is all too soon sullied by a second squall on the heels of the first. Besides, it is just when the Loch of the Mill is thus disturbed that its denizens show most curiosity in the flies you offer to their notice. The true angler ought to be indifferent to the weather so long as he enjoys sport.

In front of the Bayherivah inn is a mere ditch of a streamlet connecting the loch with an inlet of the sea. It is shallow, and a receptacle for broken pots and dishes, and the other degraded refuse of an establishment. There is a large flat stone by it, used for the ceremony of the great Sunday wash by the bare-legged children of the inn. It is quite engrossing to see them one by one bend the knee on this altar of cleanliness and devote themselves with laudable energy to soap and water. But it does not seem at all a likely place for a salmon. Yet herein, among the pots and pans, while we were at the inn, a salmon was seen, and in due course ruthlessly pitchforked and landed. We ate his steaks the next morning, and pitied him for his melancholy demise. In times of heavy rain, when the brook is flooded, of course many such innocent visitors may be expected.

There is little luxury in Barra, but great tranquillity, which is of itself a spiritual joy akin to luxury. One comes even to be glad that its scenic features are not of the startling kind. There is relief in quiet beauty after a surfeit upon the sublime. It is soothing, too, to be in a place that knows neither a daily nor a weekly newspaper, and that has no politics except domestic opinion. For a time one can almost welcome—for its novelty—a dinner of salted mutton, pitchforked salmon, and cockles imperfectly cleansed from the grit they seem to love to absorb into themselves.

But it is as well to time departure from the little isle somewhat shrewdly. It were unjust to linger here long enough to weary of Barra, and it were extremely injudicious to leave it when the barometer lies low, and even ships' captains profess doubt as to the portents. A storm in the Minch between the Outer Hebrides and Oban is

not at all an agreeable experience. It was, however, ours.

For the first two hours there was wind and sunshine. The waves bowled at us from the south-west merrily enough, and if they made sea-sick the horses in our cargo, that was no great hardship. But as we left Barra's grey shapes farther behind us the wind increased and the sunshine went. Our captain, a grey-haired, mild old man, with a blue ribbon in his button-hole, expressed amazement at the downward course of the barometer. Rarely had he known an instrument in so melancholy a mood. Backed by the darkness in front of us, with Rum—that beautiful, mysterious, unfrequented land!—high to the north-east, it made him prepare for a bad time.

And a cruel bad time it was. Never have I seen a more furious bit of Atlantic than this off Ardnamurchan Point under stress of a south-west storm. It was no ordinary storm either. The chief officer reckoned the rate of the wind at times at eighty miles to the hour, which is hurricane speed. Anyway, it raised a memorable sea, and made us pray that our engines might not break down.

"Since I took to the water," exclaimed the grey-haired captain in astonishment, "I have not seen the Sound of Mull like this!"

There were episodes of private woe enough on board during this "coarse" passage, but personal affliction seemed a small matter in comparison with our sublime and awful surroundings.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

BY MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*The Thirteenth Brydaine*," "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benefit of Clergy*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV.

THE strange young man did not move one muscle at this address. Very coolly and very slowly he drew out a chair and sat down without speaking. Then he looked straight up at Dr. Meredith's face, and a scarcely repressed tremble round the lips was added to the dancing light in the eyes, which last was now an unmistakeable daring defiance, as keen as it was evident.

"What is the meaning of what, Jim? I can't answer until I understand you, can I now?"

As she spoke Althea Godfrey tossed her straw hat on to the table, looked at it, and rubbed one hand through her short hair.

"I'm all dusty!" she exclaimed to herself. "Horribly dusty! Jim!" she added in a rather louder voice, "Jim, I've walked all the way from Fern Morton. And, Jim, I do hate country roads!"

Dr. Meredith had not moved an inch since his first adoption of his position against the door. He had stood absolutely motionless, staring with a gaze that is only to be called transfixed at the figure opposite to him. Now he brushed his hand across his brow with much the same bewildered gesture that he had used in the street. He seemed to try to brush away some veil that hung across his senses, and to make a desperate effort to see beyond it.

"It is you, I suppose?" he said vaguely. "I'm not dreaming; that I know for a fact. And I suppose I've not gone clean out of my senses since five o'clock."

"It's Althea Godfrey, if that's what you want to know," was the answer. "'This be I' all right, Jim. I'm not a tramp, and I'm not a burglar, and I'm not a lunatic!"

There was an aggressive cheeriness and unconcern about her voice and about the dancing eyes, which were still fixed on Dr. Meredith, which might have been intended—half in unconsciousness—to contradict and defy something which lay behind; something with which those daring, laughing eyes would have dropped if their owner would have allowed; something with which the elaborately mannish pose of her figure was instinct; something which was faint, half-amused, half-daring shamefacedness.

"I shall be, though, directly," muttered Dr. Meredith.

Then he seemed to pull himself together. By a great effort he seemed to tear away the confusing veil from his senses. He squared his shoulders, and the look which he had never moved from the figure opposite to him grew direct and purposeful.

"Look here, Althea," he said, "I can only repeat my question, as you have given me no answer. What is the meaning of this?"

He spoke with an emphasis on each word, and little emphatic pauses between.

The figure in the chair was turned towards him, and the grey, laughing eyes became aggressively demure.

"I'm very sorry," was the response; "but I can only repeat my answer. I can't tell you anything until you make your meaning plainer."

With the words its owner's shapely arm and hand were stretched out to the straw

hat on the table, and Althea spun it sharply and deftly round like a testotum.

"What is the meaning of this descent upon me—of your coming down here in that dress? Why did you do it? Does that convey itself to you, Althea?"

"Assuredly it does, Jim. I can always manage to give a plain answer to a plain question. This answer is very simple."

"Give it, then, please."

"Why in the world do you barricade that door so, Jim? Are there burglars in the house from whom you wish to preserve me? Tell me and then I'll tell you. You don't know how funny you look!"

There was a twinkle in the defiant dancing grey eyes which unconsciously appealed to Dr. Meredith so much as to make him loose his hold of the door-handle, and come a step or two into the room.

"Don't be so childish!" he said, discovering instantly with vexation what he had done. "Come to the point, Althea, pray!"

With a quick gesture, Althea folded her arms, and having thereby still more exaggerated her mannish pose, gazed up into her questioner's eyes, with the same defiance—defiance that, for the moment, quite quelled the struggling, half-hidden shamefacedness.

"I came because I chose, Jim. That's the answer."

"Because you chose?" echoed Dr. Meredith mechanically.

Then, leaving the door, he took two or three quick strides across the room. Under her eyelashes, Althea watched him covertly, apparently to see if he was coming to her side. Finding his steps passed her by, the grey eyes instantly became absorbed in an ostentatious survey of the details of the room.

"Because you chose?" he repeated blankly.

Althea leaned her two elbows on the table, rested her chin on her hands, and looked at Dr. Meredith across the corner of the table that was all that now separated them.

"I chose to come, because I meant to help you!" she said. "And I mean it still!" she added.

"To help me?" he said.

"To help you," she repeated. "Didn't you write to me on Wednesday, to say that you were so overworked you didn't know which way to turn?"

She paused.

"Yes," Dr. Meredith said slowly.

"Yes; I certainly did."

"Didn't you say—be honest, now, I've got your letter in my pocket—that you could not possibly go on as you were doing, and that at the same time you saw no prospect of getting any help, because the practice wouldn't stand it, at present?"

Her voice had exchanged some of its defiance for confidence, as she went on; or rather, the confidence had been added to the defiance.

And Dr. Meredith stood before her, for the moment almost guiltily. Before he could speak, she spoke again.

"If it wasn't true; if you were working on my feelings only," she went on, "on your own head be it, Jim! But you wouldn't. And I believe it was quite true, from looking at you. You're looking tired and fagged—very fagged indeed," she added, with a pretty little movement of the chin resting in her hands. "I shall have to take you in hand, first of all. I wonder if you'll be as good a patient as that nice little choking——"

"Althea!" Dr. Meredith's voice was very tense and sharp. "Althea! Don't, for goodness' sake, go on talking in this absurd manner! Collect yourself, pray, and let us consider what is the best thing to be done; the best course to take in this preposterous situation!"

"In what way?" she asked coolly. She was leaning back in her chair now, with one slightly clenched hand resting firmly on the table. A curious change had come over her with her last measured little sentence. Her personality was no longer that of the exaggerated young man, that hitherto she had seemed to be. She had become, all at once, very much herself; Althea Godfrey; and Althea Godfrey in her firmest and most decided mood.

"The best thing to be done, to my mind," she added decisively, "is to consider where I had better go to find lodgings. There are decent rooms to be had somewhere, I suppose?" There was just a slight shade of anxiety in her voice as she spoke the last words.

"Lodgings!" exclaimed Dr. Meredith. "Rooms! Are you mad, Althea! Upon my word, I think you must be."

"Why?"

The monosyllable was spoken very steadily. If the defiant light in her eyes wavered for a moment, the wavering was so slight as to be imperceptible.

"Why? Need you ask? Could any sane woman dream for a moment of staying here?"

"I am quite sane, and I intend, not only to talk of it, but to do it."

As she spoke, Althea lifted her head and looked steadily into Dr. Meredith's eyes with a light of resolution stronger even than the defiance, shining in her own.

He met her gaze equally steadily. For a long minute the two gazed at each other in perfect silence. Then Dr. Meredith made a half-choked inarticulate sound which was more expressive in its inarticulateness than any words could have been, and turning on his heel, stalked past Althea to the window, where he stood staring at the red-brick garden wall, as if the sight might help him to arrange the chaotic tumult of thought which was making his senses whirl. He felt like a man in a dream, a dream which had suddenly enveloped his senses at the moment when he pulled up in the street on his way home, and swept away everything else before it. The afternoon, the thoughts and incidents of his day's work, were all as wholly removed from him now as if they had taken place in another sphere. Nothing seemed real, and nothing seemed either possible or impossible, in the confused, dazed world in which he found himself.

As in a bad dream incident after incident, each more unreal and impossible than the last, seems to develop out of vagueness, so it was with him. First, he had been absolutely stunned, as it were, by the sight of Althea Godfrey at his side in the road; then his bewildered brain had had to try and realise the fact that she herself, in the flesh, was sitting at this moment here, in his presence, in his own room; and, lastly, he had been wholly carried off his feet by her statement as to her intentions.

The more he tried to arrange things in his mind, the more he tried to think of what was best and reasonable for him to say, or to do, the more the whole situation rose before him in an immensity of bewildered incredulity that took from him every shred of judgement, and every particle of concentration.

Three minutes passed, but they might, or all he knew, have been three hours, before the cause of all this bewilderment woke in upon it.

"Jim," Althea Godfrey said.

Mechanically, in the merest instinctive answer to his name, Dr. Meredith turned round—half hoping, he did not know how why, that the dream might have been a

dream indeed, and that, turning, he should find it so. But he was doomed to realise the contrary at once.

"Look here," she continued, "I have not had this thing fairly out yet. Listen to me."

Dr. Meredith showing no signs of doing otherwise, the grey eyes which had inspected his face to discover whether he meant to obey or no, left it and fixed themselves on the wall just above his head.

"You must look at what I have to say reasonably," she went on. No answer, opposing or otherwise, came from him, and she seemed to bring to an end her preparatory breaking of the ground, and to attack her argument determinedly.

"You cannot deny—you have not attempted to deny—that you are overworked, and must have help. I should like to know who is a more proper person to help you, than I; and who has a better right. As to my powers, you know all about them, and you've said often enough that you believed in them. I am better qualified than any ordinary assistant you could get, and I have had enough experience to make me useful. I am perfectly strong, physically; I have no work whatever of my own at present; I acknowledge no claims on me greater than yours. In fact," here the grey eyes were suddenly brought down from their level to Dr. Meredith's face, "Jim, I cannot have you slave yourself to death while I can prevent it, and I do not mean to." There had been an odd softening in her trenchant tones with the last rather unexpected turn to her argument, and the grey eyes shone with something that was neither triumph nor defiance. "You see that, Jim, dear!" she added.

For Dr. Meredith, that tone in her voice and that altered something in her eyes seemed to make a way out of his dream. His face changed as if he touched something real, and something familiar, too, and took his stand on it.

"My dear girl," he said, coming, as he spoke, much nearer to the grey-clad young man, and resting his hand on the back of her chair, "don't think for one instant that I fail to understand what made you think of this wild plan; I do not, in truth. I know it was your love for me; and, Althea, I'm grateful to you with all my heart for the thought. But it's wholly out of the question that you should carry it into practice. You must see that, in your heart."

He paused, and she wheeled round in her chair towards him.

"But I do not see that. I wholly refuse to allow that it is so. If——" she hesitated and broke off, and all at once, for a moment, that suppressed shamefacedness asserted itself, and the grey eyes suddenly fell to the floor. It was but for a moment, though. Before the pause had lasted more than a second, they were raised, and it had gone into the background again. "If——" she began, in an oddly uncertain tone. And then she broke off again. "You know as well as I do that it was the only thing to be done," she added, and the defiance in her tone was somehow not addressed to Dr. Meredith alone, but to herself also. "You know that the people here would never have accepted, or believed in, a woman doctor, as such, even if it had been possible, which it was not, naturally, for me to come here and stay in—in my own person. If that's all, Jim, it is nothing; it's an affair of mine and not of yours, and entirely my private concern. Nothing more." She had spoken rapidly and hotly, and now she stopped abruptly. She paused a moment, and the corners of her spirited mouth relaxed a little. "And consider now," she went on, "how excellently I have begun. Consider what flying colours I came off with just now. The people who were frightening my little choking boy into fits took as kindly to your new assistant as if he had been friends with them all his life."

The recollection brought back to Althea's eyes the dancing, saucy light.

"There's my name, too, Jim!" she added gleefully. "Dr. Godfrey! It's as true as true!"

A feeling of keen delight in the success of the past hour, and also the success which she believed herself to be just attaining with Dr. Meredith now, was developing the mischievous enjoyment into excited triumph.

But, precisely as her eyes brightened, Dr. Meredith's darkened. The gentle, softened air which had first come to him when he moved towards her had lasted until now. He had been evidently waiting, prepared to expostulate again, gently and forbearingly as before.

But as he saw the excitement in her manner, all trace of gentleness and forbearance vanished from him. He took his hand from her chair, and moved abruptly away, a frown settling down into deep lines on his brow.

"It is not your private concern!" he said sharply. "It is mine also! You

cannot suppose that it is anything but extremely painful to me—you don't for a moment imagine that I shall allow——"

Althea interrupted him. A sudden wave of hot colour had swept over her face, and her eyes were sparkling.

"Your permission is not asked, you see." The crisp impulsiveness of her voice seemed to suggest something behind of a highly inflammable nature. "And there's no occasion for you to give yourself any pain on my account, I assure you."

The hostility which had developed so suddenly in her tone—so suddenly indeed that it might have suggested, if Dr. Meredith's mental condition had not been far beyond the reach of suggestions, a sense of weakness within—acted upon his sorely perturbed mind much as a sudden draught of air acts upon a smouldering fire.

"That may be your opinion," he said hotly. "I'm sorry I can't agree with you! I don't want to put into words what I feel on the subject, because it wouldn't be pleasant to either of us. But that you should so far forget yourself——"

But again he was interrupted. That inflammable something within the grey-waistcoated breast which was heaving excitedly, now burst into open flame of the fiercest and hottest description. And Althea had sprung to her feet, with her head thrown back and her eyes flashing.

"Forgetting myself!" she cried. From the exceeding indignation of her voice it would have seemed that Dr. Meredith stood to answer, not only for his own speech, but as the personification of something that could not be too violently repulsed. "How dare you say such a thing as that, Jim? It is you who are forgetting yourself, I think!"

"Which only shows that you don't know what you're saying, as I hope to Heaven you don't know what you're doing!" he retorted hotly, the fire of his feeling burning hotter, as it seemed, by contact with hers. "Now, look here, Althea, we'll have no more words about it. There's a train back to town from Fern Morton in about an hour's time, and you'll go back in it. And I hope, with all my soul, that by this time to-morrow you will be as sorry as I am that you were such a——" Dr. Meredith here became inarticulate, though by no means less vehement.

It is comparatively easy for a man—even for a man in Dr. Meredith's turbulent frame of mind—to issue commands, but their fulfilment is another matter.

Althea stood facing him for a moment, the colour coming and going in her face in great burning rushes, her eyes dilated and luminous, her features quivering.

Then, with a fiercely feminine gesture which sat most quaintly upon the slender masculine-looking figure, a sudden passion of defiance flamed up in her eyes, and she stamped her foot.

"I won't go!" she said. "I won't, I won't, Jim! And you can't make me!"

They stood confronting one another, Dr. Meredith with a kind of dazed, incredulous realisation of the undeniable truth of her last words struggling in his expression with his fiery indignation; his assistant crimson from brow to chin, her fierce, defiant eyes full of tears, immovable determination trembling in every line of her face, her fingers tearing desperately at a pocket-handkerchief that resembled a small sheet. And at this auspicious moment at the door of the room there came a tap, a low, persistent, confidential tap that Dr. Meredith knew too well.

"If you please, sir; sir, if you please."

It was Mrs. French's voice, and its tone was urgent. An expression of despair mingled with the other expressions already contending for pre-eminence on Dr. Meredith's face, and he called out incoherently and hopelessly:

"All right, Mrs. French. By-and-by. Say I'm coming."

But Mrs. French was not to be thus disposed of.

"Yes, sir," she said. "But there's somebody come for you very particular—from two places, please, sir. And they say they're dying, sir!"

Mechanically, like a man moving in a nightmare, Dr. Meredith strode across the room to the door. His assistant, her face still alight with passionate feeling, had turned her head sharply on the woman's last words, and she stood now, her hand clenched on the back of a chair, listening intently.

Dr. Meredith unlocked the door, and opened it perhaps a quarter of an inch.

"Who is it?" he said roughly. "What is it?"

"It's from Mr. Marlitt's lodge. Saunders has took a turn for the worse, sir. And would you go at once, please. And there's a groom from Orchard Court, sir, come just at the same minute. Little Miss Alice Mainwaring has fallen into the fire and burnt herself awful. And will you go there this minute, sir, too, please."

Dr. Meredith's endurance touched its limits. He took refuge in insane and helpless irony.

"To both of them at once!" he said. "Yes, Mrs. French, of course I will. How could you suppose I should hesitate for a moment? It's absolutely impossible that I should leave Mary Combe this evening, but of course, one place more or less is of no consequence under the circumstances. Don't let any one be at all uneasy."

A conviction entered Mrs. French's mind at that moment, never afterwards to be completely uprooted, that hard work had told upon Dr. Meredith at last, and he was temporarily unaccountable for his speech. She was staring at the crack of the door with a face of horrified bewilderment, when the door was suddenly and coolly opened from behind him, and the grey-clad figure of the new assistant came to her relief.

"I'd better take the fresh case, of course!" the young man observed calmly to Dr. Meredith. "Where's the messenger, my good woman? He's brought a trap of some kind, I suppose?"

And with one glance at Dr. Meredith, a glance which hurled at him defiance, determination, and triumph, that gentleman's assistant strode out of the room with a swinging step, and disappeared.

"Shall I tell the boy from Marlitt's as you're coming, sir?"

With an expletive before the force and directness of which Mrs. French retreated to the other side of the passage, Dr. Meredith broke into a discordant laugh.

"Oh yes, I suppose so!" he said recklessly. "Things have arranged themselves, you see, Mrs. French. Tell him I'm coming."

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

BY ESME STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacott," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII. IN SIGHT OF DANGER.

It is very easy to drift down a stream. What is difficult is to seize an overhanging branch and to resist the current.

Forster and Penelope saw no reason to pause in that pleasant drifting; Forster, because he silenced his conscience with the idea that he was making up for Philip's neglect, and Penelope, because she was carried away by the strength of this new joy. The luxury about her had weakened some of the old strength of purpose. Ease has many hidden snares, and those who have not been used to it from childhood fall more easily into these hidden pitfalls.

Outwardly all seemed very natural, very pleasant. Forster daily became stronger, and some of the old buoyancy apparently was returning to him. Dora became happier about him, and wrote letters to her mother full of delight about the place and of admiration for the Princess, who was, she said, so kind and considerate, that she was fast curing Forster of his weakness. She told Adela about the walks they took, and how Forster was getting so strong that they were proposing to ascend the great mountain, and were now only waiting for a suitable day.

Dora was young enough to be blinded by the outwardly easy intercourse, with which no stranger or onlooker could have found fault. She did not know that Penelope's gentleness and softness were quite new to her. She could not guess when the four sat round the fire after

dinner if the weather were chilly, or strolled slowly up the glen path on a warm moonlight evening, that her brother was living a life entirely new to him, and entirely foreign to his old ideas. They naturally separated into two couples; the Duke was amused with Dora's simple light-heartedness and bright young enthusiasm, whilst Penelope and Forster, in low, soft tones, discussed many things in heaven and earth. Forster was the one whose voice was more usually heard, and Penelope listened, drinking in his ways and his ideas.

To some the life might have seemed monotonous, but that suggestion did not enter into the minds of Forster and Dora. At times Forster and Penelope were left alone for a little while, and then a strange shyness descended upon them, and a dangerous silence enveloped them. But what could they say which all the world might not hear? Penelope would not think of the future. She wanted to live only in the present, she did not wish to look forward. Now was the moment when life could be enjoyed, now, and she grasped the moment, fearing only her inability to enjoy it enough.

Philip's name was no longer mentioned between them; it was only the Duke who occasionally alluded to the absent master of the Palace—a master whom no one recognised, and whom no one wished to see. Dora, too, sometimes wondered what Philip was doing out there in the African colony; she even reminded Forster that only when he went back could Philip come home; but Forster merely replied that that was not a fact, for Philip was not really bound to remain.

"Mr. Winskell is so good I'm sure he won't leave the sheep in the wilderness," said Dora, laughing. The brother and

sister were alone when she spoke thus. A reserve which Dora could not explain to herself made her chary of mentioning the absent husband to Penelope.

"I do not understand Philip," replied Forster, then he changed the conversation.

It was the day after this remark was made that, when the party met at breakfast, Penelope exclaimed :

"We have not waited in vain. To-day is quite perfect for our ascent. I will send a boy early to take up our provisions, and if you feel equal to it, Mr. Bethune, I think it will not be too hot."

"I am sure I shall enjoy it," said Forster, looking at the Duke. "You will come too?"

"I am afraid I can't come to-day, Penelope. Oldcorn has made me promise to go with him to the old plantation. There are trees to be marked. He is so seldom at liberty that I must go."

"That is disappointing," said Dora.

"But you must go all the same. Tomorrow we might row to the end of the lake, and the little steamer or the carriage might take us back."

For one moment Penelope wondered if they should wait for her uncle, then she decided that scruples were foolish. Dora would be with them, and Mrs. Grundy seldom had time to visit this glen. A few tourists would perhaps be found on the summit, but tourists were, in Penelope's eyes, hardly human beings. So the preparations were made, and Forster felt almost a boy again as he helped the Princess to pack some baskets. The lad was despatched with the mountain pony, and an hour later the three started up the glen. Dora flitted hither and thither, collecting flowers, hunting for rare ferns. Conversation was almost impossible till the noisy Rothery was left behind, but the voices of nature spoke for them, using a thousand new terms of love.

Then they reached the gate, and paused. Dora had started off with Nero to pick some wild roses growing a little off the path. Forster leant on the gate to rest, for they had promised themselves to take everything very easily.

"It certainly is a perfect day, Princess," said Forster, and then he smiled to himself at the remembrance of his former objection to this name. Now it seemed the only title fit for this perfect woman.

Penzie noted his words, and her heart beat faster. How grand and noble he was, how handsome he looked now that he was so much stronger! How well they two could have understood all that was best in life!

"Yes," she said softly, as if thinking of something else; "it is a beautiful day. If only one could be sure of other beautiful days. It is the certainty that the fine days must pass away which is so saddening."

"But the remembrance of beauty can never be taken away. You have been very kind, Princess, to let me stay here, and to—to—do me so much good."

"It's not good of me at all," she answered, blushing in spite of herself.

"Do you know," he continued, "that the thought of your loneliness oppressed me strongly in my illness. I blamed myself for having brought it about, and then——"

"You should not have done so."

"Then I noticed how little the one who should have cared for you dwelt upon it. Do you know that you caused the first real quarrel between me and Philip?" This was the first time Forster had alluded to this subject.

"Oh! did you quarrel?" she asked hurriedly.

"Yes; I could not understand him. Knowing you, I was sure——"

"But you don't know me," answered Penzie hurriedly, greatly longing to tell him the truth.

At this moment Nero came bounding back, and Dora soon followed him.

"I'm sure I've found it."

"Found what?" said Forster absently.

"The moonwort. It is very small, and the cows have kindly spared it. I told Mr. De Lucy I should find it, and he did not believe me. Oh, Penelope, you don't know how that man contradicts me! He really is the most disagreeable person I have ever met."

"I thought that he was a very superior individual."

"Yes, superior, but oh! I hate superior men."

"They spend much time in sparring, certainly," said Forster, walking on, and wishing that Dora had been at this moment anywhere, anywhere out of the Vale of the Rothery.

Then they began to climb the bare mountain side. The little path, seen far ahead, rose higher and higher, clinging, as it were, to the hillside. Soft summer clouds floated lazily above them; and invisible larks added their song to the chorus of joy. Now and then the sheep, followed by several large lambs, rushed off frightened at nothing, and the lazy cows, heedless of them, chewed the short grass.

As they rose higher among loose, grey boulders, partly covered with ferns or low grass, they could only walk in single file. They kept the grey wall ever in sight, but it seemed an endless pilgrimage to reach it.

Penelope remembered the day she had walked up there alone, and how Philip had come to her rescue. She tried to put away that remembrance, only conscious how much happier she was now than she had been that day.

At times Forster walked beside her, ready to give her a helping hand; now and then she actually accepted it, though help was really quite unnecessary to this mountain maid.

At last they reached the gate and looked down into the great basin-like hollow, where the high tarn slept peacefully, and where above it rose the real summit. On either side of the tarn was the buttress-like neck of land, by climbing up which the summit might be gained, but first they had to go down to the tarn, walking through long grass and marsh and sluggish rivulets.

"You must take care of your footing," said Forster. "You might stumble here."

Then suddenly Dora called out:

"Look at this dearest little nest. It is all woven in with the dry grass, but the birds have long ago forsaken it."

The nest was a very slight fabric, and yet it was strong enough to resist the fearful storms that so often sweep over the mountain tarns. It had once been a home, and love had built it. Penelope stooped down and examined it, replacing it gently where Dora had found it.

Then they proceeded, after stopping to gaze at the deep blue waters of the tarn. Now there was no fear of being stopped by any difficulty. Forster was beside her, and Penelope led the way, smiling happily as, now and then, her companion warned her of danger.

Dora was delighted at the stiff climb which awaited them, nor was she easily persuaded to be careful, though the danger of a false step was not to be lightly estimated.

However, nothing exciting occurred, and when they reached the spot where on a former occasion Penelope had been stopped, and where Philip had come to rescue her, she did not like the remembrance of it. There he had so tenderly helped her, and there his honest face had had a ray of hope in it. She hurried away from Forster's side for a minute, and without

his knowing the reason, he felt the change in her. She would not accept his help, and she was silent for the rest of the climb. But when they reached the cairn, and when Dora exclaimed at the beauty of the scene, the feeling passed away. Forster's brightness returned, and all was again joyful.

"If only I could get our poor fellows here and make them admire all this beauty," said Forster, in spite of himself thinking of the colony. "The mind, however, is its own place, and they might not feel elevated even by the sight of these blue ranges."

"Well, I never heard you doubt before, Forster, that your dear fellows had not as sensitive feelings as our own," exclaimed Dora. "I am afraid doubt has entered your strong castle."

"I am afraid it has."

"At least, you do not doubt that you are hungry," said Penelope, smiling.

Then the boy was told to unpack the hamper, and the present was once more cloudless.

"Do you know, dear Princess, that you have quite enchanted us," remarked Dora, when the three sat quietly enjoying the peaks and their varying shadows. "Forster has not spoken of returning home, and this morning mother sent me a letter wishing to know when we proposed doing so. Adela adds that the De Lucys think of coming up here for a few days on their way to Scotland. Isn't that odd?"

"Yes," said Forster quickly, "we must be thinking of going away soon."

"Why must you? You are not strong enough yet to go back to—to Africa."

"If not there, at all events I have many friends who will be wanting me. I have forsaken them for a long time."

Forster spoke wearily. The old enthusiasm about his work seemed gone.

"You must wait, at all events, till the De Lucys come. They will go to the 'Lake Hotel,' I suppose. It is very comfortable there, I believe."

"I prefer our solitude," said Forster a little sadly, for however sweet their solitude had been, where was to be the end of it?

To-day for the first time there came to him the feeling that there must be an end, and that there was something very weakening in this earthly paradise. He felt powerless to decide; he only knew that to be near Penelope was at present his heaven.

Outwardly they bandied merry words.

Dora's spirits never flagged—why should they? Her mind reflected all the goodness and the beauty about her, and was incapable at present of perceiving the evil. Besides, Forster's presence meant for her everything that was highest and best on earth.

Then they had reluctantly to make a move. Though they had said nothing of a private nature, Penelope knew that she and Forster understood that words are poor messengers, and that there is something stronger than language.

"We shall often think of this afternoon," he said, including Dora because he was obliged to do so.

"Uncle will regret not having come with us," answered Penelope, angry with herself for saying anything so commonplace, but incapable of finding anything else suitable for Dora's ears.

"Which way shall we go down?" asked Dora.

"If you are not afraid, I can take you down a steep but a much shorter way than we came, only we must cross the old wood on the right-hand side of the valley."

"That will be delightful. We have never been there. Is that where the Duke was going to mark trees?" said Dora.

"Yes; but he will have gone home long before we get there."

Again Penelope led the way, and this time Forster no longer pretended to himself that he was acting the "preux chevalier"; as he noted her every movement, her perfect figure, her face with its pure outline and exquisite colouring, the knowledge of the truth overwhelmed him.

He was in love with her, in love with Phillip's neglected wife, and he was sinning in thought if not in deed. He, Forster Bethune, whose life had been stainless, whose reputation as a philanthropist was widespread! What would the world say if it knew this? What would his mother and his sister say? Even his father, retired book-worm that he was, would not his gentlemanly sense of honour be entirely horrified by hearing that his only son had fallen so low? The truth also horrified him, but the fact gave him intense happiness. He loved her; he could not marry her, he could do nothing, but he loved her, and he must not even let her know it. He hated himself for realising the position, but now self-blindness could go no farther.

At last they reached the edge of the mountain. The descent to the head of the valley below was steep, but not impossible.

After this one could save a long bend by taking the opposite path into the wood which Penelope had mentioned.

They did not hurry themselves, so that by the time they had reached the entrance of the wood the sun was sinking fast, and the shadows already looked mysterious striking across the long vista of fir stems.

Then again silence fell on them, and the mystery of life, and of their lives in particular, enveloped the Princess and her lover, whilst to Dora the place only suggested a new hunting-field for strange ferns and flowers.

It so happened that now Forster found himself several times walking alone with Penelope.

At last Dora's voice was again heard as she came running up to them.

"Oh, Forster, I've seen such a clump of beech fern! I must dig it up; but it is getting chilly, you ought not to be out. Do make him get home quickly, dear Princess, and then use your authority over him. Oh, Forster, give me your big pocket-handkerchief to carry home my ferns. I won't be long, I promise you."

The two acquiesced silently. Forster merely remarked as she ran off:

"Don't be long, Dora, and don't lose yourself."

"You have but to follow the path," added Penelope. "If you are not in soon I shall send a search party."

"Never fear! And please don't wait for me."

CHAPTER XXXIV. THE KING'S QUEST.

DORA'S patch of beech fern was really on the far side of the wood, where a low stone wall protected it from tourists, and separated it from the neighbouring wild country. In one moist corner, covering a steep bank, the delicate fern spread itself in safe luxuriance. Dora had long wished to possess this plant, and in her ardour of possession, she forgot all else. Barely waiting to admire its beautiful growth and its perfect surroundings, she began tearing up the soft boggy soil, then spreading out Forster's handkerchief, she congratulated herself about the box which she would fill, and which she would send home for Adela to plant in her fernery.

She was in the midst of this entrancing occupation when she was extremely astonished by hearing a low laugh close beside her. She started up, and found herself face to face with a strange, wild-looking old man.

His costume was certainly extraordinary, and was something between that of a farmer and a peasant. The fustian of his knee-breeches was dirty and patched, and his coat looked as if it had weathered many storms. But Dora was more attentive to his face than to his clothes. She saw that the old man was lame, and helped himself to crawl about with a stout stick. His deep-set eyes looked very cunning, peering out as they did from beneath shaggy eyebrows. The expression of his still hale-looking face was made up partly of cunning, and partly of malice.

The young girl was naturally courageous, but she felt a slight shudder as she hastily stood up, still holding a clump of fern roots in her hands.

"I've caught you thieving," he said with a low chuckle, but Dora was surprised to hear that though the voice was rough, the accent was that of an educated man. "Who gave you leave, young miss, to take those ferns away?"

"The Princess, of course," answered Dora indignantly.

"Eh, the Princess, was it? but she has no power to give you leave. This land is mine, don't you know that?" he peered down upon it as if he were seeing his own name inscribed upon the damp moss; "the land is mine for all the proud Princess may think; mine, I tell you."

"Yours!" said Dora incredulously, not yet realising the truth. "Yours, I thought all this hillside belonged to the Winakella. Besides, the Princess——"

"That's what she says. She's proud, proud as the old gentleman himself, so was her great-aunt. Ah, you thought this was hers, did you? Listen, young miss, I'll tell you a secret. Ah, ah!"

Dora was now more than a little alarmed at the old man's look. A sudden idea entered her head. "He is mad. What shall I do?" Then she looked at his crippled condition, and scolded herself for her cowardice. She had but to use her nimble feet, and the old man could never come near to her. She wished, however, to vindicate the Princess before she took to flight.

"I remember now that this wood does belong to the Princess. She said that it was hers, as we looked at it from the top of the mountain."

The old man chuckled again as if there were some joke in the words.

"She said that, did she, when she looked down on all this? She called it hers.

Curse her pride. Come here, young miss; you look fit to keep a secret. Eh? listen. This wood isn't hers. It's mine, mine, the King of Rothery. Have not you heard of him? Ah, ah! I keep out of the way now. I don't like those grand doings up there and those new periwig servants; but it's all mine."

"You are the King of Rothery? Are you her father?"

Dora's tone expressed the astonishment she felt.

"You don't believe it? Ah, ah! That is it, you think—I'm put away; but I prefer it. My son knew better than Penelope. He never would have been such a fool as she is. Penelope's a fool, I tell you."

Dora knew that the old King was considered to be somewhat "off his head." She was not, therefore, so much surprised as she otherwise would have been. It was no use arguing with a madman, however, so Dora tried to show proper humility, in spite of the shock she had received by finding out she was in the presence of Penelope's father.

"I am sorry I trespassed. I will go on at once," she said with dignity blended with humility.

But all this seemed wasted on the strange being in front of her.

"No; come along with me. I want you. Penelope won't believe me. Listen; who is that man who walked on with her? I saw him."

"That was my brother."

"That's the man Penelope should have married; but she didn't ask me. She thinks—hush!—she may hear us."

He looked round him and listened.

Dora blushed—though the gathering darkness hid her blushes—at the mention of such a strange thing, then, remembering the man's madness, she again tried to get away from him.

"I must go back to the Palace; they will be waiting for me."

"Ah!" laughed the King, as if Dora had made a joke, "waiting for you! Not a bit of it. Come with me; I want you. I'll show you a shorter way home. I know every stone and every stick in the Rothery Valley. Come, follow me, if you can."

Dora smiled at the last remark, for to follow a cripple, such as the one before her, presented no sort of difficulty. She considered a moment if it were best to follow him or to leave him. He seemed to divine her thoughts, for he turned round and peered at her in a most unpleasant manner.

Dora was beginning to be a little afraid of this strange King, when a new idea struck her.

"I will come to-morrow if that will suit you as well, sir."

"No, no; I want you now. Ah, you don't know," he said, beginning to walk on by the help of the low wall; "it's not often they let me alone. To-day, Jim has gone with that precious fool Graybarrow."

Dora resigned herself and followed. It seemed better to give in to the King's whim, whatever it might be, than to escape; but she could not help feeling a little nervous at being in this lonely wood alone with this mad, cunning old man.

"You like Penelope, don't you?" he asked, after a time of insudible mutterings, as he painfully made his way along the side of the wood.

"Yes, of course I do," said Dora enthusiastically.

"Then tell her what a fool she has been. She won't believe me. Before my accident, when—— you know, my son died. Well, before that time, she did not get it all her own way; no more did Graybarrow: But now—— hush! Do you hear any one following us?"

Dora wished much that she could answer in the affirmative; but only the birds piped an occasional note, and the tiny streams tinkled their melodies in the near distance. The girl was feeling weary after her long climb up the mountain, and she began to wonder how soon she would be released.

"I don't hear anything; but it is getting late."

"Make haste, then," he said impatiently, as if Dora were leading the way. "Do you know that all these months I have been looking and looking for it! But my memory was gone; it was the cursed boat accident. I knew, and yet I didn't know; but to-day, to-day, when they left me alone, it came back to me. If I tell you, you'll remember. You are young, and you have not had time to be wicked. I may forget again, but I know it now. Keep close to the wall. Penelope was a fool. Ah, ah! You know that man, her husband? Husband, indeed! A mere nobody. I never thought Penelope would sink so low. She has got the pride of the devil in her. Eh! but so have I. Look, is that a broken stump? Stop, girl, and see if there's an old wasp's nest by the side."

Dora now felt really nervous, but what should she do? Where was this crazy old man leading her, and what was his object?

She looked furtively behind her to see if she could see a way of escape.

"Stoop, girl!" shouted her companion impatiently, "and tell me if you can see the nest!"

Dora complied, and found what she was directed to find.

"Yes, sir; here it is."

"Good; now bend to the left and you will strike upon an old wall."

Dora followed closely, wondering what was to be the next move. Her only idea was how best to get away.

In a few moments they came to a thick-set plantation of old beeches, which looked as if no one had approached them for centuries. There was no real path near to them, only a track evidently made by the foot of one man.

The King found it difficult to get along, but he was not to be daunted. Every moment he looked back to see that Dora was following him.

At last they reached a low grey wall, built of massive blocks of stone, but appearing as if it had once been begun and never continued, for it ended abruptly, close to a deep ditch, where ferns grew to a luxuriant height. On the other side, the wall ran at right angles to the boundary wall, but the underwood was so thick that it could not be followed to its starting-point, in this direction at all events.

"It's here," said the old man, with a low laugh of intense satisfaction. "You must swear, girl, to tell no one but Penelope what you have seen, and to reveal the place to no one, not even to her. Swear!"

Dora laughed. She was tickled by the idea of having to swear to keep secret the existence of an old wall.

"I can't swear, indeed I can't, but you can take my word—a Bethune never breaks promises, never."

"I only tell you for fear that I may forget again. My memory is gone, but to-day I remembered, to-morrow it might be gone; strange, eh? Now, girl, swear."

"I promise never to tell any one where this wall is," said Dora, smiling. "Never to tell even the Princess"—who must know very well, thought Dora.

"But you can tell her what you see. Now, come, don't mind the ditch."

Dora had no wish to descend into the deep, damp ditch, but she saw she was expected to do so. If only she could get rid of her companion it mattered not what she did, and soon she found herself by his side, whilst he began eagerly brushing

away the weeds and the ferns from the face of the old wall.

"It's here. Where are my tools? It can't be done without them."

He put his hand into a big coat pocket, and drew out a chisel. His trembling fingers would hardly steady the handle, but with Dora's help the stone he was tampering with began to move. Then, by some trick of the old man's hand, it appeared to turn as if on a pivot, and a deep cavity was thus revealed.

Dora now began to take greater interest in the proceedings. The old man's words were not all mere fancy. He did wish to show her something, and no girl is above the romantic pleasure of a discovery.

"What is in there?" she asked eagerly.

The King thrust his hand in and drew out a long tin box, somewhat in the shape of a coffin.

"Now look, girl. Tell Penelope what you have seen. Ay. She didn't believe in her father, so she sold herself for gold. What a fool she was, when all the time there was plenty here; plenty, I tell you."

He opened the box, which was not locked, and Dora saw in the dim light that it was full of canvas bags and queer legal papers. The old man opened one of the bags, and his fingers lovingly handled coin, for he took out a handful of gold pieces, and displayed them to the astonished girl.

"Penelope doesn't believe it," he muttered; "but it's true. There was gold enough, gold enough without her help; there's a fortune here, a fortune. The old Kings of Rothery weren't fools, I tell you, they laid by; and Penelope's great-aunt was a miser to the end of her life. But it was no use telling people. If the farmers know you are rich they cheat you, and they never knew it; Greybarrow did not know it, no more did Penelope. Ah! Good Heaven! what fools women can be."

"It is getting very damp, sir. Hadn't we better return to the Palace?" said Dora, who began to feel that something sad and sordid lay underneath this mad miser's mutterings.

"Yes, you're right, girl; Oldcorn will come prying round. He doesn't know, but he guesses. Did I make you swear?"

"No, sir, but I promised. I don't want to say anything to any one. It does not concern me."

"You're not such a fool for your age. I liked your face when you were stealing my ferns. Everything here is mine. I'm the King of Rothery. Greybarrow wants

to oust me, but he's not clever enough to do it. I let them play their little games. If they like to rebuild the old place without my help, so much the better for me. Eh, eh?"

He tried hastily to shove back the box, but Dora had to help him, and when all was finished the old man appeared weary.

"I must lean on your shoulder, girl, so. Now, could you find your way back alone?"

"No, sir, I do not think that I could, especially as it is getting so dusky."

"But I know it well, even though I'm—what do they say I am up there?" he added, lowering his voice.

"Nothing, sir. Shall we turn to the right or to the left? There are two paths here."

"Come to the left, and then I'll show you your road. I must go on alone. There's Oldcorn will be coming, and he's a wicked spy. He suspects something."

They walked on a little while in silence, then the King pointed to a path which went northward through the wood.

"Follow that path, girl—and remember your promise."

"Thank you, sir," answered Dora, her heart bounding with joy at her near release.

"Wait a moment. That's your brother, you say. Well, then, I'll tell you something. Penelope's in love with him. She's caught. Eh, eh!" and the old man chuckled in a way which made Dora shiver.

Then he turned away, and began going as quickly as he could in the opposite direction, every now and then looking over his shoulder to see if Dora were watching him. For a few moments she did so, then, seized with a sudden overpowering fear, she ran on as fast as she could go, and as if evil beings were pursuing her.

THE MOUNTAINS OF SKYE.

A MAN may go far in the holiday season to find an island so provocative as Skye of praise on the one hand, and condemnation on the other.

We gathered this much from the very beginning, as we sat to be slowly smoke-dried in the men's room at the "Sligachan Hotel" after a pretty smart soaking between Portree and the Coolins. Very varied were the remarks about the place that passed to and fro between the visitors, more or less established, who had just come in with their pipes from the dining-room.

There was one angler who said that in future he would spend his Augusts at

home, fly-fishing in the domestic wash-tub. At least he would do that ere again travelling north to Prince Charlie's island in search of "fush." He was clearly an irascible little person; yet there did seem some sense in his wrath as he finished up his diatribe by pointing at two very muddy pairs of trousers hanging in front of the fire, and added:

"Ever since I've been in this hole, my garments there have either been getting drenched on my legs or shrinking before the peats in an attempt to dry. It's not good enough!"

This raised a laugh. Two or three other men, who were in temper akin to the angler, agreed with him. They candidly avowed that Skye was a much over-praised country.

Not so, however, a brace of gentlemen with the skin loose on their noses. One of these wore spectacles and a smile of pity for the men who were casting stones at Skye's fair fame. The other turned the leaves of a number of the Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal.

The spectacled tourist of these two could at length bear it no longer.

"I tell you what," he interposed, "in my opinion, this is the most attractive spot in the British Isles. If any of you fellows had been with us on Scour Alaisdair yesterday, you'd have thought so too. The mistake you make is in coming here to fish instead of to do some climbing. For rock work Sligachan is an A1 centre; for trout—well, I believe what they give us for breakfast here are caught with a net. No one seems to get anything worth getting."

The other visitor with a skinned nose nodded approval, and glanced casually at the palm of his right hand.

"How is it going?" enquired one of the calumniators of Skye, also looking at this man's palm.

"First rate," was the reply.

The gentleman, we ascertained later, had had an awkward slip among the granite crags of Scour Alaisdair in descending. If he hadn't held on when he did, he would have broken his neck. As it was, he had a nasty gash from what palmists call the line of life to the base of his little finger. The misadventure had not in the least dulled his enthusiasm about the island of Flora Macdonald and Prince Charlie.

It was a pretty rough evening. One of the windows was open—for about fifteen pipes were adding to the thickness of the atmosphere—and periodically the wind

billowed in upon us with a roar, and raised not only our hair but even the newspapers and parti-coloured files—made for trout—on the table. The pessimists among us looked up at each of the more furious of these gusts, and growled: "Nice, isn't it!" "What a charming place, to be sure!" and the like sarcasms. To the anglers it seemed perfectly insulting that Nature should thus concoct a storm without, as it appeared, the accompaniment of a single raindrop. The storm that had drenched us—the newcomers—had long ago run off the hills into the burns, and so into the Sligachan River and to the sea.

But it is mere waste of breath to cavil at the tricks of the weather. We went to bed in a hurricane, and woke the next morning amid surroundings of sweet and perfect peace. Not quite perfect though, for the midges were soon abroad to share the engaging scene with us. Fascinated by the sunny outlook, I took my kodak to the riverside before the breakfast-bell rang. A particularly smart, liver-complexioned Highland ox stood in too tempting an attitude against a background of white boulders, bustling stream, and distant mountain shape. But the ox was not to be caught. He gazed at the camera for one magnificent moment, then decamped with a bellow to join his comrades and the cows farther down the valley. I, for my part, turned to re-enter the hotel, and then for the first time saw the Cuchullins, or Coolins, at close quarters.

Viewed from the Oban steamer as it approaches Skye, these mountains are scarcely sensational, though bold enough in their outlines. But from Sligachan they are much more suggestive. I saw Scour na Gilleann—which, being interpreted, means the Peak of the Young Man—this day with a slight veil of snow-white vapour about its black cone-crest. But the veil could not disassemble the fine crags of the summit, and a practised eye could judge that on a still nearer acquaintance these crags would develop into neat and daring little pinnacles and precipices, such as a man may worthily exercise himself upon as a preliminary for yet more perilous, and therefore yet more delightful, work in the Alps and elsewhere. Mr. Gibson, a well-known cragsman in the north, says in the "Scottish Mountaineering Journal" that "in the matter of rock-climbing the Coolins may be more fitly compared with the Alps than our central Highlands with the Coolins." This seems a substantial

compliment to the Skye mountains, considering that their height is only about three thousand feet above sea level.

Of course the Coolins are not all the mountains in Skye. The Quiraing in the north is an upland mass broken into pinnacles, with a character of its own as marked as that of the Coolins. The Needle Rock of the Quiraing would frighten cragmen and women who have already written Great Gable's Needle among their conquests. So, too, the Storr Mountain near the coast, with its isolated upstanding pinnacle, "the Old Man of Storr," must be mentioned with respect. Seen from the water, the Storr Rocks are as absorbing as anything in Skye. But they must all yield to the Coolins—this little circle of mountains embracing Loch Coruisk, their different summits connected by knife-blade edges and with precipices galore on all sides.

There was an American lady at breakfast in the hotel. She had driven over from Portree that morning. She hurried through her breakfast that she might hurry upon the shaggy little pony that awaited her outside, with a red-bearded and energetic gillie for its attendant. The gillie and pony were under contract to rush the American lady to Coruisk and back, including a boat trip to the southerly Prince Charlie's Cave, so that she might dine at Sligachan in the evening, and be again at Portree for the night in readiness for the five o'clock steamer to somewhere else the next morning.

"What like will it be?" echoed a gillie of whom, for talking's sake, we made enquiry as to the weather; "it'll be hot, air—whatever."

And hot it was. The sun drew the perfume from the heather which mantles all the land of Skye, even as the day before the rain had made the walk from Portree odorous all the way with bog myrtle. The river sang lower and lower as the hours sped. Scour na Gillean to the west of Glen Sligachan became purple as the sky itself, and the streaks of greenery on Glamaig's clean-cut sides east of the glen were refreshing to behold.

We strolled hither and we strolled thither. From Glen Sligachan we lounged back to the hotel to lunch, and listen to the curses of the anglers, who had had a most wearing, profitless morning. Afterwards more strolling, with Scour na Gillean always in the foreground.

An irresistible burn with a caldron in it—full of crystal clear water—compelled

bathing. But the midges drove us out of the water, even as they had driven us into it. Never were there such unresting plagues. They swarmed inquisitively about the pipe-bowl that was destined to slay or stupefy them; but they neither died nor lost their fiendish sensibility. And so we had to spend the beautiful evening hours just before dinner veiled like a Moalein lady.

It was a pleasant sight to see a score of gentle tourists groaning—and worse—in the face of the sunset sky of crimson and gold they had come forth from the inn to admire. Certain pretty countenances could hardly have been more disfigured by the attentions of mosquitoes than they were the next morning at breakfast, simply and solely by these despicable little winged atoms.

This day we extended our lounge to Coruisk itself, and were fain to admire the American lady's vigour in cramming such an excursion into her day's programme as a mere incident of it.

There were others bound for the same goal—a tan-coloured pedagogue and a lady with whom he had discussed Greek sculpture—with knowledge on both sides—over three or four successive meals. It seemed as if we might be blessed to witness the incubation of a young romance in their case. Each impressed the other clearly with a sense of congenial intellectuality. And so it had been contrived between them that the lady should ride to Coruisk on a sure-footed quadruped, and the gentleman should attend her on foot.

They promised soon to overtake us, who put our faith in our boots. But, as might be supposed, they did no such thing. It was expecting too much to expect them even to wish to do it, once they had the taste of such sweet untroubled communion upon their souls. Black Scour na Gillean, with the sun-glisten on the mica of its granite; abrupt Marsco, with the bothie on its flank; and prodigious Blaven, whose rock precipices are matchless in Skye for their sublimity—these dumb comrades they could endure; but human forms and voices, hardly!

The river in the glen ran thinly on its stones, and there were no clouds to cast welcome shadows upon its water. One lunatic angler—he was very young—had come forth with his rod to do battle against midges and the clear, starved stream in combination. His enterprise was almost heroic. From our elevation we saw him below, knee-deep in the water, alternately

casting and sweeping his face longitudinally with a maddened promptitude.

"And these be pleasure-seekers!" we said in our pity as we tramped up the glen in the hot, soft air, with the perspiration guttering down our faces.

We admired Marscoo, as who would not, seeing it under such fair conditions! From the bothie on the mountain slope—set near a pure spring, which makes a pretty little bog for the tourist to traverse—sallied forth two barelegged ladies to cut rushes in the valley. They were Highland lassies of the unspoiled kind—simple and shy, and unresting in their labour from dawn to dewy eve. But, alas! they had no English, or next to none. No matter if they missed that accomplishment. If the humble little cot with the thatch on it held a living for them all the year round, they had the wherewithal for entire contentment.

There is nothing finer in all Britain for its long bulk of precipices, innocent of all verdure, than Blaven. The rock swings itself upward, nearly three thousand feet of wall, from the glittering lake, green-rushed and heather-banked. The wall is strenuously seamed; deep-out, zigzagging crevices tear it from top to bottom; yet a man must have strong nerves to attempt to scale it.

Later we saw the monarch to even more advantage when we had climbed the col of Drumbhain and stood a thousand feet above the valley with Blaven facing us, but a mile or so distant, and nothing between us and its tremendous wall.

But, indeed, this was a day of sensational prospects. From Drumbhain we saw the Coolins as it were, from the centre of their semicircle. Such a jagged, forbidding curve of peaks—forbidding from one aspect only, of course—one may hardly match anywhere. Each mountain seemed to vie with its neighbour in the acuteness of angle of its final crest. Their uniformity of height was also a circumstance to wonder at. Though the summit of one might be a mere walking-stick of a crag shot up from a convenient shoulder, the next one, springing perchance in a single glorious incline from Coruisk's waters, dressed its topmost height so narrowly level with it that you might almost have set a huge billiard-table on the pair of crests and played the game with confidence.

From Drumbhain we took long reckless strides down the mountain side until Coruisk's sequestered water was reached. We were certainly hours ahead of our more intellectual friends.

As many people know, Scott has the following among other lines on Loch Coruisk:

For all is rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone,
As if were here denied
The summer sun, the spring's sweet dew,
That clothe with many a varied hue
The bleakest mountain side.

However, on this day the sun turned the loch into a dazzling mirror, and we were not awed at all. I have seen the Thames by London Bridge look more thrilling. The lonely pool was on its best behaviour, good to bathe and dabble in, and so smooth that we could have sent a paper boat from its one shore to the opposite shore without risk of shipwreck.

We did not cavil at this state of affairs. The sublime is all very well if it can be enjoyed without great discomfort. To see Coruisk as Scott saw it means facing divers hazards of storm and cloud, which one is not always willing to encounter. We found our pleasure in basking, lazy eating and drinking, smoking, and staring at the Old Man of Skye, that alluring—but not readily accessible—tooth of rock on the very top of Scour Dearg. Perhaps in the year half-a-dozen cragmen scale Scour Dearg and his tooth—which is precipitous three hundred feet on one side and one hundred feet on the other—and leave their cards behind them for the eagles. But it is no ordinary task.

Though we missed Coruisk in its mad moods, we returned to Sligachan in the gloaming contented. The mendacious pedagogue and his lady friend had not started, after all. They had spent the day instead in a cool arbour, with intellectual talk and the midges.

Coruisk put us in the humour for Scour na Gillean, and we plotted against the mountain that night in the smoking-room. But the weather suddenly conspired against us in our turn, and for three successive days we had to fish in default. There was a spate, and everything dripped in the smoking-room. The roar of the river sounded at the dinner-table like the playful tumbling of mountains against each other by immeasurable Titans.

The gentlemen with the peeled noses went off in disgust on the third day of continuous rain. They gave us some advice ere they left—advice which we forgot with disgraceful celerity. Who wants to profit by other people's experience—whether in mountain-climbing or the general pains and pleasures of existence?

On the fourth day, however, we started and all was auspicious. The Old Man of Storr soon showed in the north to tell us of our upward progress over the heather moorland to the base of the mountain proper.

Now, there are two or three routes to Scour na Gillean, but only one for untrained mountaineers. We chose the simplest.

Even that cost us trouble enough. We had our bearings correctly, and clambered over the huge boulders with sharp edges which represent the last stage but one of the ascent. Then we paused for an undue length of time to smoke and contemplate the mountain's head.

It is certainly a rugged and captivating head, this of Scour na Gillean. You have no idea of it until you are, so to speak, on its shoulders. Then, if you are of common flesh and blood, you gaze at it and admit to yourself that you wish you had been to the top and were safely back again. I can compare it to nothing but a huge house—say two hundred feet high—with walls just a little out of the perpendicular, and nicks and rifts and ledges here and there for the convenience of strong-headed persons who are determined to ascend it.

This is the easiest way of getting up. But there are other ways. While we smoked and assured ourselves that it must be much simpler than it looks—as it is, in fact—we also glanced out of the corners of our eyes at the black, isolated masses of rock which constitute “the pinnacle route” to the summit. They were really too much for our feelings, these pinnacles.

We went up hand-over-hand at length, by cracks and chimneys, by arm power and leg leverage, and in a few minutes we had our reward. We were on the mossy final boulder, with its broken flag string, its tiny cairn, and its tin box containing the names of those of our recent predecessors who prided themselves on their achievement.

It is a thrilling sort of perch. You can hardly help dangling your legs over a precipice if there are two or three persons on the top. The sense of height may nowhere be enjoyed to more perfection than here.

Now we could have borne this very well if the wind had not sprung up. This fact was quite disturbing to us. It almost affected our equilibrium, and there was no telling what it might not do if it veered and caught us strongly in our return from the Scour's head to his shoulders.

We therefore made but a brief stay on the summit, though long enough to appre-

ciate the stern grandeur of Lotta Corrie, and the sensational surroundings of the different edges which link together the various peaks of the Coolins. Eagles we saw none, nor did we expect to see any. But we saw about half Skye, and marvelled at its treelessness.

Long ere we were again on unsensational ground, Scour na Gillean had taken respectable rank in our minds among the other mountains we had climbed. I don't know which of us made the mistake, but we got so startlingly near the northern precipice of the summit that we had to clamber back and try again. But we were at the dinner-table that evening with no worse misadventure than peeled noses.

The next day the rain set in once more. The weather is certainly awkward in this attractive island. It must have been in a fit of weather pique that a tourist wrote in the visitors' book here the series of clever verses which his successors read with such mixed feelings:

Land of cunning, crafty bodies,
Foes to all ungodly fun,
Those who sum up man's whole duty—
Heaven, hell, and number one.

Land of psalms and drowsy sermons,
Pawky wits and snuffy bores,
Faur-gaun chiefti so fond of Scotland,
That they leave it fast by scores!

There is, however, the antidote for this poison on the same page:

Land of chivalry and freedom,
Land of old historic fame,
May your noble sons and daughters
Long preserve their honoured name.
Etc., etc.

Skye—like Scotland herself—has, since men peopled it, seen much that is creditable, and at least something discreditable to its inhabitants. The very names of the Coolins and their glens tell of the bloody feuds of the ancient chieftains of her clans. I suppose Flora Macdonald may well be set against these memories for Skye's redemption.

As for the Coolins, they are not to be remembered without a certain affection. I hope, ere long, to see more of them and their rugged charms.

LIZ.

A COMPLETE STORY.

“YOU are a good little thing, Cinderella!”

“Lor, Miss 'Olme, me! You should 'ear missis; you wouldn't think so then.”

“I do hear ‘missis,’ very often, and I

am afraid she sometimes finds you very tiresome, but when you are older, Cinderella, you will understand that people judge others by what those others are to them, and I find you very good, though you may not be good in general. This shows that the more people you are good to, the better character you will get, whether you deserve it or not."

Cinderella looked puzzled. She was not unused to this sensation of groping in the dark, but at such times she felt that Miss Holme was not purposely puzzling her, but was talking to herself quite as much as she was speaking to her. Furthermore she considered all Miss Holme's sayings, dark or otherwise, as the utterances of the highest wisdom, worthy of much consideration, and, whenever they took the form of command or precept, to be carried out as faithfully as possible.

There was something, however, this little unfeathered London sparrow noted and did understand. The lodger had been out all day, she had returned with white face and heavy steps, and having given Cinderella a word of praise for her bustling welcome, had begun to talk in enigmas. Cinderella tilted her head on one side and looked at Miss Holme with a pair of bright sharp eyes, an attitude which gave her the appearance of an inquisitive little bird.

"You looks wore out," she said sympathetically.

"I am 'wore' out, and I have had no luck to-day, my dear."

"Never you mind, miss, that'll come in a lump, all at wunst, you see if it don't," said the child, nodding her head sagely.

"All things come to those who wait—if they don't die first. Ah, well, Cinderella, we will hope you are a faithful prophetess, and that the lump will come soon."

"Corse it will, miss. Now you git yer tea, an' I'll come up presently and take away the things."

Cinderella — prison-born, gutter-bred, older at fifteen than many women who could number twice her years; ill fed, ill clad, ill housed; all her life sent from pillar to post, and from post to pillar; the very shuttlecock of fortune, exposed to every temptation under the sun, with no single safeguard to protect her except a wholesome fear of the law and her own natural instincts which made for right. A waif, a stray, consistently neglected by that society which would sternly vindicate the slightest dereliction from its laws, a helpless little human creature who all through its hapless

babyhood and young childhood had never felt loving lips pressed on its tiny cheek, had never known what it was to be caressed and called by endearing names, but who had been buffeted and kicked and cursed.

She had never been allowed to forget that she was born in gaol, and that her mother had deserted her at the age of ten, leaving her, a little wizened old woman, to get her living as best or as worst she could.

And what a living it had been! A meal for minding a baby, a halfpenny for running errands, an old frock or a shake-down in an overcrowded room in payment for a day's work, a few coppers for cleaning doorsteps, the shelter of an empty house, the selling of matches, the gleanings of garbage heaps in the markets! Then one day the child's luck turned, and, from being an industrious little "stepper" and faithful runner of errands, she got taken in as day-girl, and finally promoted to the post of maid-of-all-work in the poor lodging-house where Miss Holme found her.

In the slums where she had dwelt she had been known as "Liz," though whether she had a baptismal right to that or any other name is doubtful, but Miss Holme called her Cinderella, and told her the old fairy story, which so pleased and excited the child's fancy that she grew quite proud of her nickname.

Miss Holme was a revelation to Liz. She was sharp enough to know that the lodger had "come down" in the world; that she had not always lived in a bed-sitting room, and fed upon weak tea, bread, and herrings, with an occasional launching out into other cheap delicacies. Miss Holme had not many clothes, but those she had were fine and dainty, the like of which Liz had never seen before; her hands and feet, too, were quite different from those of the other people Liz had known, and her voice, well, "it beat everythink, even the flute wot the man played outside the public-houses."

The most remarkable thing about the lodger was her passion for soap and water. Liz at first regarded it as a species of harmless lunacy, but after a while, fired by both precept and example, Liz herself became a convert, and, like all converts, was so eaten up with zeal that her skin usually shone with soap and friction. It was wonderful, too, the things that Miss Holme did with a needle and thread to Liz's wardrobe; but the greatest wonder of all was that the lodger talked to her in a manner she had never heard before, and on

one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, Miss Holme had kissed her.

Liz could never remember being kissed before by any one older than herself. She grew quite red, and her eyes filled with unbidden tears as with quivering lips she ejaculated :

"Oh, Miss 'Olme !"

And then Miss Holme had patted her cheek, and said :

"You are lonely, and I am lonely, little Cinderella, which is a strong reason why we should be friends."

Liz noticed that the lodger's eyes were wet, too. With inborn delicacy the child said nothing, but from that day the whole of her loving heart was given entirely to Miss Holme, given with the fervour and passion of a devotee.

Left alone, the lodger began her meal. Indeed, she was weary and faint as much with hunger as with fatigue. But the coarse food repelled her, and she soon left the table and seated herself before the fire.

She was only twenty-three, this girl, and already very weary of life. The battle was going hardly with her. Friendless and forlorn, the loneliness of her lot weighed upon her even more heavily than the failure of her hopes and ambition. For the last three years she had fought unaided, uncheered by word or thought. The few distant relatives she possessed ignored her, because she was not like them and because she was poor. Proud, sensitive, she resolved henceforth to tread her path alone, and alone she lived in the cruel whirlpool of London. She possessed just enough means to keep body and soul together, while she devoted all her strength to the art she loved so well.

Sometimes she got a story or an article accepted by a magazine or journal, and the proceeds made gala days for her, when she dreamed of success and of fame. But her writing was uncertain, sometimes morbid, the result of the unnatural, unhealthy, repressed life she was forced to lead. With no friend to whom she could reveal the burthens that oppressed her, she poured them out in all their bitterness on paper, and the world is only interested in success.

Then, by degrees, the power of writing left her. Her mind, overburdened with cares, with heartaickness, with a bitter sense of desolation, refused to work ; her brain grew numb ; and for hours she would sit staring helplessly at the blank sheets of paper which seemed to stare back at

her in hideous mockery. She tried other things, teaching, companionship, anything ; but want of training, inexperience, lack of interest pushed her out of the already over-crowded market.

At last she lost heart altogether. She did not realise it then, but afterwards she knew that the only thing which saved her from sinking into the dull apathy of despair was the love of the poor drudge whom she had named Cinderella.

Poor ignorant little waif that she was, she yet had in her some latent sense of refinement that kept her ignorance from being repulsive. The evil that she had seen seemed to have passed her by, leaving her unstained by its crimson hue. Such beautiful things as love, and trust, and faith, which had never been awakened in her heart before, sprang full-grown into life under the touch of Katherine Holme's hand, and by reason of that very love and faith and trust, the lodger felt that she was bound to fight on.

But it was dreary work, and she grew frightened at the thought of the long years which perhaps stretched before her. If she could but throw off the burthen and lie down to sleep like a tired child !

"'Ave yer done, miss ? Lor', you ain't eat much ! Worn't it cooked right ?"

The shadow fell from the lodger's face, and she turned with a smile to answer Liz, who stood by the table, a very picture of disappointment.

"It was cooked very nicely, Cinderella, but I am too tired to eat much to-night, I think."

"It's bad to be like that," said the child with quite a motherly air. "I am, sometimes, when I feels all bones, and every one on 'em an ache. You'd better git to bed early ; I only wishes as I could, too."

"Why can't you ?"

"Missis 'as gone to the theayter, and I've got to wait up for her. She do worrit, but she don't go hout very often, I will say that for her."

"No, she does not go out often, as you say, and if she 'worrits,' I am afraid in turn she has a lot to 'worrit' her."

"She do, miss, she do indeed. All the lodgers ain't like you, and it's allus those as pays the wust and the most onregular as gives themselves the most airs."

Miss Holme smiled. She was very tired, very heartaick and depressed, but she knew how to make Liz happy for a brief hour, and if you cannot be happy yourself, perhaps the next best thing is to make some one else happy.

"Suppose you take away my tea-things, Cinderella, wash them, and do everything downstairs you have to do, and then come back and wait here for Mrs. Blakey."

"Oh, miss, may I really?" cried Liz delightedly.

"Yes, really, and perhaps I will tell you a story," said Miss Holme, and Liz hurried away all the more speedily to return.

The child interested the lodger, who was sincerely desirous of doing something to improve her condition and to lessen her ignorance. But this was not easy, for there is nothing more difficult than for educated persons to make themselves understood by the very ignorant. What is to the one ordinary language and ideas is to the other hopelessly unintelligible, therefore to be mistrusted. Liz had no time to devote to learning in the ordinary way; such arts as reading or writing must for ever remain mysteries to her, but by dressing elementary principles in the garb of a simple story, Miss Holme had done something towards awakening Liz's intellectual and moral faculties.

The most terrible thing to combat was her extreme age. Apparently Liz had never been young. On her return, as she crouched close to the fender, this impression seemed to gain on Miss Holme, making her feel years her visitor's junior.

"What are your earliest recollections, Cinderella? I mean, what is the thing you can first remember?" she asked.

Liz puckered her brows in an endeavour to rescue something concrete from a chaos of nebulous impression, but the habit of sequential thought was new to her. Before she knew the lodger, things had simply floated through her brain without any order, and apparently by their own volition.

"I dunno," she said slowly. "It's mostly the streets, and they allus seem cold, an' wet, an' dark, 'cept where the publices was. We, mother an' me, used to walk about beggin' till she got coppers enough, then she went into a pub till the lot was gone agin."

"You were not much worse off when she left you, then?" the lodger said, repressing a shudder.

"Not a bit," said Liz, shaking her head, "an' I didn't get whacked so much. You see, miss, if I didn't look miserable enuff, she'd pinch me to make me cry, and that fetched the pennies out of people's pockets. Some are orful soft when they see a kid cryin'."

"What made you give up begging when

you were left alone?" Miss Holme enquired.

"I didn't like it," said Liz. "It was just as 'ard work as anythink else, an' I'd 'ad more than enuff on it. I'd rather do somethink real like," she added.

"You are quite right, Cinderella; real work is a satisfaction in itself, but sham work is a miserable thing. I know that."

Liz opened her eyes.

"I don't think you know much about sham work, miss," she said.

"Not of your sort, perhaps," said Miss Holme sadly, "but there are as many kinds of sham work as there are of real work, Cinderella, and every one is tempted to do some occasionally. Now I will tell you the story I promised."

Liz's eyes sparkled with delight. A story from the lodger was to her the highest bliss, and for the next hour at least she was a happy child, led by a kindly hand through the fields of beautiful thought and fancy, put into language suited to her stunted intellectual growth.

It was late before Liz got to bed, and no sooner had she laid her weary little head on her hard pillow than she was asleep. She always slept that heavy sleep which comes to the young whose days are passed in hard physical toil; heavy, dreamless, so that when she was roused in the morning, it seemed to her that she had only been sleeping a few minutes.

But this night, even the few minutes seemed shorter than usual when she was awakened by a loud knocking, which she had heard for some time before it thoroughly roused her. She started up in the little truckle bed and rubbed her eyes, which began to smart in a strange fashion. The kitchen was still dark, but the air was thick and pungent with hot smoke. In another moment the truth burst upon the child. The knocking was not her mistress rousing her, it was some one hammering at the street door without a moment's cessation, and the smoke and heat told why only too plainly.

With a sob of terror Liz huddled on one or two of her poor garments, and opening the kitchen door, ran into a small room where her mistress slept, and which was situated between the kitchen and scullery. With lightning rapidity, she roused the woman and helped her into some clothing. As the pair approached the staircase they were driven back by the reeking smoke, which seemed to scorch them with its hot breath.

"This way," her mistress cried, and seizing Liz by the arm she hastened back to the kitchen, and unbolting the area door they rushed up the steps into the street.

By this time the other inmates had been roused and were standing huddled together in a frightened knot on the opposite side of the road, as with bitter lamentations they watched the fire getting firm hold of the house which contained nearly all their worldly possessions.

"Where's Miss 'Olme?" cried Liz, as her eyes travelled over the group without finding the figure she sought.

"I don't know," said a man. "As I passed I banged on her door loud enough to wake the dead. She must have followed us down."

"Then where is she?" persisted the child shrilly.

No one knew.

With throbbing heart Liz dashed wildly amongst the people, but Miss Holme was not there.

"She wouldn't 'ave gone off without knowing as every one was out," Liz said to herself; "she ain't that sort."

She ran up to a policeman who was keeping the crowd from the pathway in front of the burning house.

"There's a lady inside," she said; "second floor, back."

"No, there isn't, my girl, every one is down. Don't you frighten yourself," he added kindly to the excited little creature.

"There is, there is, I tell you. Let me go."

The man caught hold of her as she was darting past him. Quick as thought the old gutter instincts reasserted their supremacy, and turning her head, Liz fastened her teeth in the man's hand.

With an exclamation of pain he released his grasp, and before he could recover from his surprise she was up the steps and had disappeared into the house.

A cry of horror broke from the crowd. The word went round that there was some one left in the place, and some men rushed to a neighbouring builder's yard for a ladder.

Meanwhile Liz fought her way almost inch by inch through the blinding smoke. She could see nothing, and all the blood in her body seemed to surge to her ears as she laboured heavily for her breath. As she passed a door on the first floor, an angry tongue of flame leaped out at her, luridly dividing the smoke for an instant. She avoided it and sped on her way with one thought filling her mind through it

all. Miss Holme had been in the habit of locking her door, but as she was asleep before Liz left the room, it was possible she had not done so. "If she has, oh, what shall I do!" thought the child.

At last the door was reached, and grasping the handle, Liz found to her joy that it yielded to her touch. The room was full of smoke, so that she had to grope her way to the bed, on which, sure enough, she felt Miss Holme. Liz shook her violently without eliciting any response. Evidently she was quite insensible.

Somehow, she scarcely knew how, Liz managed to roll the lodger on to a blanket, which she roughly knotted together. With the corners as a purchase, she half dragged, half carried the inanimate form the few yards which separated this room from the one in front, for Liz knew that it was from the street alone that help could come.

In this room the smoke was not so dense, and, as Liz flung up the window, a ringing cheer from the people below heralded the arrival of a long ladder. Eager hands placed it in position, and careless of the flames already darting from the lower windows, a policeman ascended to where the child stood.

"'Ere she is," Liz cried triumphantly; "take hold."

With some difficulty the man succeeded in balancing his burden.

"Wait, I'll be back again directly for you," he said, as he slowly began to descend.

Liz watched him for a second, then suddenly she heard an angry roar behind her, and felt an intolerable heat which scorched her flesh. The object of her love in safety, Liz lost her self-possession. With a cry of terror she sprang on to the window-sill. The policeman had just placed his load in the outstretched arms of those below, and was turning to re-ascend the ladder, unheeding the flames, which were by this time licking its rungs, when the child, glancing down into what seemed a pit of fire, lost her balance, and with a piteous cry, fell on to the stones beneath.

A few hours later Liz lay on a bed in a hospital ward.

"No, she wasn't in any pain," she said, "and was quite happy."

So happy she could not understand why Miss Holme looked so sorrowful, or the tall doctor at the foot of the bed so serious. Liz was rather astonished to find that she could not move her legs at all, and that her

hands were not very strong either, still she supposed they would come all right, because the big gentleman and the white-capped nurse looked as though they could do anything between them.

Meanwhile she lay quite still, and was very happy. Indeed, she was so clear and collected in her mind, and her voice sounded so strong, that Miss Holme had drawn this new doctor aside and asked him, as she had already asked the house surgeon, if he was sure nothing could be done. But he shook his head gently, and she returned to the bedside with her eyes full of tears.

"Why, you're cryin'! You ain't 'urt anywheres, are you?" asked Liz anxiously.

"No, dear, I am not hurt anywhere, thanks to your bravery; but, oh, little Cinderella, you are hurt—badly hurt!"

"Am I?" said the child wonderingly; "I don't feel it." Then after a pause she quietly asked: "Do you mean, miss, as I ain't goin' to git better?"

"I am afraid not, Cinderella," said the lodger, gently stroking the poor little rough hand she held in hers.

Liz was quiet for a moment, but no shade of fear crossed her face.

"Don't you trouble about it, Miss 'Olme. I don't mind—much," she said at last.

The doctor looked quickly at Miss Holme.

"Holme!" he said. "Is that your name?"

"Yes; Katherine Holme."

"Good heavens! I might have seen the likeness if I had looked at you before. For the last three years I have been searching all over England for you."

Miss Holme looked at him in astonishment.

"For me?" she said. "I do not know you."

"Did your mother never speak to you of an old friend of hers, a friend long before she met your father? We were boy and girl together, and then—well, circumstances parted us. She married, and I went to walk the hospitals," he finished abruptly.

"You must be Arthur Leslie," said the girl.

"Yes, I am Arthur Leslie. Your mother wrote to me shortly before she died, asking me to befriend her child. I was abroad at the time, and the letter was forwarded on from place to place till it was months old before it reached me. When I got back I hastened at once to

Dawlish, only to find your mother dead and you gone. I followed you up, till at last you disappeared, leaving no trace behind."

Liz had been listening intently to the conversation. She did not quite understand it all, but the fact that here apparently was a friend for Miss Holme was all she cared about. She turned her eyes towards the doctor.

"Are you goin' to be a friend to 'er?" she asked, with a sharp, business-like little air, which sat strangely upon her at such a time.

"Indeed I am, if she will let me," he answered earnestly.

"She's lonely, and often miser'ble. I shall go all the easier if I know there's some one to look arter 'er," pursued the child, with a return to the old-fashioned, motherly manner she often adopted towards the lodger.

"She need never be lonely any more, and, if it lies in my power to prevent it, she shall never be miserable either," he said, speaking to Liz, but looking at the other girl.

Miss Holme opened her lips to speak, but Liz had not finished yet.

"Is that a promise?" she asked.

"It is a most solemn promise, my dear," the doctor said, laying his hand on hers. "I, too, am a lonely old man, and if my old friend's child will take a daughter's place in my heart, she will make me happier than I have been for many years."

"I know you quite well, Dr. Leslie, although I have never seen you before, and there is no one in the world to whom I could turn so readily as to yourself. I do not think it will be difficult for my mother's daughter to learn to love you. I—I have been very unhappy since my mother died."

Miss Holme broke off, but as the two clasped hands across the dying child, Dr. Leslie's sympathetic face showed that he understood.

"That's all right," said Liz. "Oh, my dear, I am that 'appy!"

She heaved a sigh as she spoke, and the nurse moved a little nearer. Miss Holme gave a half-frightened glance of enquiry at the doctor, who answered it by an almost imperceptible nod.

"Dear little Cinderella, how good you have always been to me," Miss Holme said in a broken voice.

"It worn't nothink, miss. I allus wanted to do something for you," Liz

said, looking at Miss Holme with eyes full of love. "If I 'adn't tumbled off the ladder I shouldn't 'ave been brought 'ere, and then you wouldn't 'a met 'im," she said after a pause.

"No," said Miss Holme. "All my good things I owe to you, dear child."

"Then I'm glad, I'm glad—glad—glad," and with the word still lingering in her throat Liz fell back dead.

THE LAND OF THE KING'S CHILDREN.

THE beetling crags of purple mountain ranges guard the beautiful capital of classic Rajputana, "the land of the King's children" and the most ancient native dynasty of India. The romantic scenery which surrounds Jeypore makes an appropriate setting for the dramatic history built up through countless ages on this sacred soil, once trodden, according to Hindu tradition, by the footsteps of the gods, who descended to earth in the likeness of men and originated the royal Rajput race.

The monsoon has wept itself away, and the green robe of earth wears that transient freshness fated to vanish like the dews of dawn beneath the stress of sun and dust, as the last of the lingering clouds disappears on the northern horizon. Foaming streams swirl through the deep "nullahs" which cleave the stony flanks of the rugged heights, and blue lakes gleam like sapphires from a wild moorland where flaxen plumes of pampas grass rustle in the balmy breeze. Red-legged cranes, wading in the shallow water, toss the sparkling drops over their soft grey plumage, and gorgeous peacocks sun themselves on a pale green carpet of springing corn. Antelopes bound lightly into the dark depths of the tiger-haunted jungle which clothes the lower spurs of the mountain chain; and a trading caravan, armed with the Rajput shield and spear, gives a touch of human life to the lonely landscape, as the horses and camels of the gally-clad cavalcade relieve the monotony of the scene with scarlet trappings and jingling bells. The beauty of local costume becomes increasingly apparent as we approach Jeypore, and the brilliant garb of the martial-looking men and graceful women transports us in fancy to the palmy days of that historic past when the "City of Victory" reached the meridian of her

splendour. Beauty of architecture and wealth of colour combine to render the capital of Rajputana one of the fairest cities in the East. Massive walls and lofty towers conceal the loveliness of the interior edifices, and the fantastic line of rose-coloured palaces towering above the noble main street, known as the Ruby Chauk, dawns upon the eye with the abruptness of a dramatic surprise. The deep flush which bathes the pierced and fretted stone is enhanced by the cloudless blue of the Indian sky, and forms the groundwork of elaborate Arabesque ornamentation in white chunam on every level surface. The Ruby Chauk, forty yards in width, runs through the entire length of the town, crossed at right angles by the Amber Chauk, another broad thoroughfare lined with buildings of fanciful architecture, and the Maharajah's Palace in the centre of the city covers about a seventh part of the total area.

The beautiful Audience Chamber of white marble, and the stately hall of the nobles supported by rows of polished columns, rise from two outer courts where sculptured fountains play amid clustering palms, and the Silver Palace, built round the central quadrangle, resembles some enchanted pile of fairyland. Rose and white balconies of chiselled embroidery, fragile as spun glass, swing like webs of lace between aerial turrets, and the elaborate tracery of oriel windows shows the same delicacy of design and execution. Myriad slender shafts of blue-veined alabaster and rose-tinted stone surrounded by fretted arcades carry out the prevailing idea of airy lightness, and the snowy cupolas above that sanctum sanctorum in the heart of the building known as "the Crown of the Palace," look as though a breath would blow them away like balls of thistledown into the blue vault of heaven. Priceless treasures are contained within the walls of the Maharajah's princely abode, and a volume of the Mahabharata, one of the two great epic poems of ancient India, is the gem of the historic collection. This curiously illuminated manuscript, written in Persian character, was executed by command of the Emperor Akbar, who paid a lac of rupees, a sum equivalent to forty thousand pounds sterling, to the scribe who accomplished the laborious task. Golden margins and brilliant colours glow with unfaded freshness, and the delicacy of the poetical calligraphy suggests the utmost refinement of culture. Antique portraits

on silver, copper, shell, and foil decorate the marble walls of the "Hall of Splendour," which forms a noble vestibule to the Shish Mahal, a glass pavilion glittering with crystal chandeliers multiplied by reflection in countless mirrors. Marble alcoves overlook a green pleasure shaded by a plantation, where the scarlet stars of blossoming poinsettias brighten the gloom of the banyan-trees which form a roof of verdure with interlacing boughs. Across the secluded enclosure another wing of the great palace contains a noble billiard-room, which appears a somewhat incongruous feature in the residence of an Indian prince. The dining-rooms of the Maharajah and his five wives, though luxuriously furnished, display the usual combination of display and disorder which characterises native life. The ladies have evidently feasted on the floor, and the litter of rice, crumbs, and mysterious scraps of unknown and suspicious-looking articles of local consumption is a gradual accumulation from numerous banquets eaten on the unswept carpets of richest velvet pile. The spacious gardens with their flowers and fountains, hedges of roses, and thickets of palm, are laid out with extraordinary care and taste on the borders of a broad blue tank, which ripples up to the marble steps and balustrades of a supplementary mansion, known as the Cloud Palace, and occupied by a hundred dancing-girls, who belong to the Maharajah's household.

After a glance at the splendid stud of three hundred horses and the gold and silver carriages of State, we visit a cage of immense tigers caught in the Gulta Pass, a deep gorge visible in the nearest mountain chain beneath the frowning bastions of Tiger Fort.

The great Temple of Ganesh, the elephant-headed god of wisdom, is the favourite shrine of the Rajput, but the presence of mosques and minarets perpetuates the Moslem influence exercised by the royal house of Delhi, and cemented by an alliance with the daughter of a Rajput Maharajah. The beautiful streets blaze with colour as brown forms, robed in every shade of red, blue, and violet, orange, yellow, and green, gather round fountain and fig-tree; or stroll down the sunny highway in the leisurely fashion of the East. Elephants, camels, and cows mingle with the parti-coloured throng, and the haughty bearing of innumerable soldiers, who dash past with jingling accoutrements on spirited Arab horses, maintains the character of

this historic province, where equestrian skill is proverbial, and every man considers himself a warrior and a prince.

Beyond the splendid Saracenic pile of Hawah Mahal, the "Palace of the Winds," occupied by the mother of the monarch, a mounted troop with pennons flying on glittering spears, clatters along in a cloud of dust. An open barouche follows, drawn by prancing bays, and a portly-looking gentleman in frock-coat, pale blue turban, and lavender kids, who lolls back on the velvet cushions, is the divine "Child of the Sun," the haughty Maharajah of Jeypore, whose claim to supernatural origin is recognised by every subject of his realm. A stern, brown face, with full red lips and blazing black eyes, turns towards us for a moment as one lavender hand is laid on the Royal brow in acknowledgement of our salutations, but English obtuseness fails to perceive the mystic halo of divinity which is supposed to encircle the Prince's turbaned head. The Royal pedigree may be traced back through a genealogy of one hundred and thirty-one names in a direct line to Kisa, the second son of Rama Chundra, the fifth Avâtar of the god Vishnu, and traditionally begotten by the great luminary regarded in the infancy of the world as the ever-present god of India. The chivalrous deeds of Rama Chundra, the priestly hero of the Brahmins in his life as a divine incarnation, are sung in the noble Indian epic of the Ramayana, which shares the fame of the Mahabharata. An Emperor of Delhi conferred upon the Maharajah of Jeypore the title of "One and a quarter," still proudly borne by his descendants. The curious appellation signified that in consequence of supernatural descent, this historic line exceeded the rest of human kind by the quarter or fourth part in the pedigree which represents the divine element. It was even considered a condescension when a Rajput Princess married one of the Great Moguls, and innumerable female children of Rajput race were annually put to death because no husbands of equal rank could be found for them.

In the early days of India the women were comparatively free and independent, even exercising uncontrolled choice in marriage. This power of selection was called "Swayamvara," and a tournament was arranged in order that the suitors might distinguish themselves in some feat of skill or courage, after which they awaited the decision of the damsel.

Professor Monier Williams states as a fact that through the heroic period of Indian history, and up to the beginning of the Christian era, women had many privileges from which they were subsequently excluded. They were not shut out from the light of heaven behind the folds of a purdah or the walls of a zenana, and Sanskrit dramas confirm the theory that the better classes received some education, and though speaking the provincial dialects among themselves, were addressed by the pundits in Sanskrit, and evidently understood the learned language perfectly. They appeared unveiled in public. The germ of the principle which prescribed female imprisonment in a zenana exists in the famous code of Manu, the mythical law-giver of the Brahmin caste, which declared him to be the grandson of Brahma; but the system of seclusion only became general after the Mohammedan conquest. Then; partly as a security from the tyranny of their conquerors, and partly from the example of Mohammedan custom; the Indian women of the higher classes were rigidly condemned to a perpetual cloistral enclosure. The first use that a Hindu made of his acquired wealth was to shut up the ladies of his household; but the custom obtained by slow degrees in Rajputana.

The present Maharajah, unfettered by the stereotyped ideas of the Indian past, has endowed his capital with an elaborate system of waterworks, a gas holder and a school of art, without detracting from the pictorial beauty of an Oriental city, rich in relics of bygone days and jealously conservative of all that upholds her native dignity. Brilliant bazaars with their artistic specialties of marble and glass mosaic, ebony inlaid with silver, and glittering spangle-work of coloured foil, surround the ruins of the great Hindu observatory, where gigantic azimuth circles and altitude pillars rise from weed-grown courts, in which Brahmin seers and astrologers of olden time worked out their mysterious problems, and cast the horoscopes of the heaven-born race beneath the open canopy of the star-spangled sky.

As we descend the Ruby Chauk at sunset, the unearthly radiance which suffuses the magnificent street suggests the origin of its appropriate name. A golden haze bathes earth and sky in a sea of glory, and the rose-red palaces absorb rather than reflect the glowing light, until the opaque solidity of each massive edifice

appears fused into the crimson translucence of molten jewels, and the unfathomable depths of carmine splendour resemble the red heart of a fiery furnace.

As the pageant of colour fades away, and the purple veil of the brief Indian twilight falls over the city, the dismal clank of chains drowns the mingled noises of the street, as crowds of fettered convicts, escorted by armed warders and mounted soldiers with heavy muskets, return from their daily toil to the great prison outside the walls. Though a few scowling and beetle-browed faces suggest infinite capacities of villainy, a jaunty air of reckless unconcern distinguishes the majority of the criminals, and from the contemptuous remarks "en passant," made with reference to the "Sahib-lok," and translated for our benefit by the guide, it appears that the Rajput even under the humiliation of imprisonment is still sustained by the proud consciousness of innate superiority to the common herd of men.

The heavy dew still sparkles on the palms and flowers of the great public gardens as we start for the ancient capital of Ambar, from which a mediæval Maharajah removed his Court to Jeypore. Feathery neem-trees border the road, and clumps of bristling cactus give a touch of barbaric fierceness to the rocky landscape. Slender minarets, known as "the Delhi Milestones," mark the seven miles which extend between the two cities, and the sacred landmarks erected for the pilgrims who visited the shrines of Ambar also commemorate the Rajput Sultana, who deigned to bestow her hand upon the most powerful monarch of the East, himself a parvenu of mushroom stock when measured by the standard of Rajputana's historic dynasty, with a lineage lost in the mist of ages and old when the world was young.

The fortress-crowned heights contract until they form the walls of a deep ravine, and a vaulted gateway wreathed with moss-grown inscriptions, and encrusted with crumbling sculpture, marks the entrance to the ruined city. A stately elephant, provided by his Highness the Maharajah for the steep ascent to the Palace of Ambar, awaits our arrival; the turbaned mahout feeding his charge with lengths of sugar-cane, and then swarming up the trunk to a seat on the huge head. The elephant kneels, and we mount by a flight of steps to the lofty howdah protected by a gilt railing. The awaying motion soon

ceases to be unpleasant, and though our peace of mind is at first disturbed by speculations upon the elephant's feelings when his head is prodded by a sharp goad, we are soon convinced that impenetrable thickness of skull opposes a surface of cast-iron to the weapon in the rider's hand. The road skirts the margin of a blue lake alive with man-eating alligators, which rear their shark-like heads from the water or bask in the sun on the rocky shore. Brown figures are bathing in the shadowy creeks, apparently undisturbed by the presence of the gruesome monsters, or secure in the questionable native belief that the voracious "mugger," however numerous, will only attack solitary individuals, and invariably flee from mankind as a noun of multitude.

A curve in the winding valley discloses the magnificent palace on a precipitous hill which rises above the lake. The vast pile crowns the summit of the mountain with a diadem of towers and cupolas, and dominates the ruined temples, shrines, and streets, scattered through the numerous gorges of the riven crags. The four graceful kiosks of the Royal Zenana rise immediately above the mouldering city, protected by the castellated fortress on the crest of the heights, where a tall white minaret pricks the hot blue sky above the long line of loopholed battlements and frowning watch-towers. The saintly Bishop Heber, whose apostolic labours embraced an extensive range of Indian travel, expressed an opinion that the gorgeous Palace of Ambar, throned on the mountain and mirrored in the lake, formed a scene of transcendent beauty unrivalled in the whole peninsula. Crossing a stone bridge over the narrowing water, the elephant slowly mounts the steep acclivity, and through three majestic gateways of carved stone we reach a noble quadrangle paved with red and white tiles. The Dewan-i-Khas, or Audience Chamber, a beautiful pavilion of snowy marble, flanks "the abode of the men," an edifice rich in barbaric colour and elaborate sculpture, and entered by the finest door in the world.

The Hall of Victory glows with brilliant arabesques of birds and flowers, sacred scrolls, and geometrical figures inlaid with coloured stones on panels of alabaster; and the marble bath-rooms, adorned with curious mythological paintings, manifest the same of Oriental luxury in beauty of architecture and ingenuity of construction. The richly-

decorated corridors of the zenana converge round a magnificent central hall known as "The Alcove of Light." Glittering sheets of opalescent mica line the walls, and delicately-enamelled garlands of white and yellow jasmine encircle the oval mirrors which reflect the many-coloured spangle-work of the over-arching cupola. The aerial loveliness of this octagonal chamber suggests an evanescent creation of fragile frost-work, or a fabric woven by fairy hands from limpid moonlight and pearly mist. The Temple of Devi, which forms an integral part of the palatial pile, serves as a grim reminder of the barbaric cruelties which existed side by side with the culture and refinement of ancient India. In this famous sanctuary the daily morning and evening sacrifice is still offered at the shrine of an insatiable goddess, whose thirst for blood, though now perforce appeased by the slaughter of an animal, formerly demanded a holocaust of human victims. The annual supply was provided by the Maharajahs of olden time from captives taken in battle, or from the numerous subjects who either in court or camp incurred the royal displeasure.

Ruined Ambar and prosperous Jeypore both demonstrate the complex religious associations of the reigning house. The bird's-eye view from the battlements commands the entire extent of the mouldering and time-worn city, which lies in the hollow of the hills, where the spiral shrines and crumbling temples of Hindu worship alternate with the domes and minarets of deserted mosques, and the marble tombs of Moslem sultans. Weeds grow thickly in crevice and cranny, blue spears of aloe push through broken pavements, and feathery grasses wave above overthrown pillars. Birds build their nests in cavernous cupola or sculptured niche, and the ancient city which enshrines a world of memories is only inhabited by Hindu fakirs and fanatical dervishes, who retain their faith in the occult virtue which the traditions of Brahmin and Mohammedan alike attribute to the forgotten sepulchres and neglected sanctuaries of royal Ambar.

The Glen of the Kings' Tombs, a continuation of the long ravine which pierces the shadowy mountains, and a royal burial-place from time immemorial, wears the same aspect of desolation and decay which characterises the ruined city. An unearthly hush broods over the scene, and the solemn silence remains unbroken even by the muttered "Mantra" of a grimy

fakir or the nasal chant of a turbaned sheik.

The ancient Maharajahs sleep undisturbed in the shadow of the everlasting hills, as though considered past praying for, or superior to the need of priestly intercession. In the tranquil beauty of the Indian evening we look for the last time on the towering palace silhouetted against the golden sky, which turns the blue lake into a sheet of flame. Birds fly home to roost, and the musical trill of the bulbul echoes from a banyan-tree in the cypress-shaded garden of the Royal Zenana. The ceaseless use of the goad makes no apparent impression on the brain or the pace of the elephant, until the sight of the waiting carriage excites his sluggish mind, and he pursues the uneven tenor of his way with a joyous trumpeting. In the gathering darkness we jolt along the deserted road, past the invisible "milestones" of the vanished Moguls, towards the distant row of glittering gaslights which shed the illumination of the nineteenth century over the historic capital of old-world Rajputana.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

BY MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*The Thirteenth Brydian*," "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benefits of Clergy*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

IT was half-past ten on Sunday morning: a lovely, brilliant April morning. The four cracked old bells of Mary Combe church were chiming, and producing thereby a sound which was even more discordantly quavering than their week-day efforts in connection with the clock. But Mary Combe was used to the sound and respected it, with a respect that the newest bell-metal of the newest bell-founders could never have gained. There were lengthy traditions afloat in the place anent the age and dignity of the church bells, and a proposal made by Mr. Howard to renew them had met with unconcealed disfavour.

The people of Mary Combe were obeying the voice they respected and duly preparing themselves to go to church. For though, as has been said, a calm indifference to sermons was one of the characteristics of Mary Combe, another was the somewhat inconsistent conviction which dwelt in the minds of a large section of that community, that it was a duty to go and "sit under" them with weekly deference. A few individuals, who had

a leaning towards slow progression, and much conversation on the way, were already wending their way in groups of twos and threes, which now and then, in the pursuit of a common interest, amalgamated with each other. In the midst of them, threading his way through them with a quick tread that was in odd contrast to their more contemplative gait, walked Dr. Meredith. That he was not going to church, his dress, which was his everyday suit of brown, testified to the eyes which scanned him as he passed. In Mary Combe as in wider spheres, a black coat and a high hat were, if your rank in life permitted you to purchase these articles, absolutely necessary to appear at church in. Even Mr. Sharpe, the somewhat struggling owner of Mary Combe's one shop, managed to produce these credentials. It was also well known and understood that Dr. Meredith was very nearly as busy on Sundays as on other days; therefore he was scarcely ever expected by his fellow parishioners to join them.

Accordingly the speculation which his appearance originated this morning was not on whether he was or was not coming to church. It dealt with a different matter: whether he was or was not on his way to "Johnson's."

"He's there, I know for certain sure," affirmed Mrs. Green enigmatically, as Dr. Meredith passed her. Dressed in her irreproachable "Sunday's best"—a gown of wiry black stuff and a bordered shawl—she was accompanying and conversing with a few select friends. "The young gentleman he took the rooms—them two front downstairs once—last night. And what more likely now than that he's steppin' up to see him, and how he likes it, for himself?"

This confused assortment of pronouns was accepted with a murmur of comprehending assent. And all the little group concentrated their attention on Dr. Meredith, who had distanced them by some yards now, and was proceeding rapidly along the street in front of them. In this their example was faithfully followed on either hand, and as the road rose slightly in the direction of the church, Dr. Meredith was in very literal truth the "cynosure of neighbouring eyes" when he stopped, most satisfactorily in view, and knocked sharply and rapidly with his stick on the door of a house about half-way up the rise.

The house was a little low, substantial

cottage, with three windows on the ground floor. One of these windows had been enlarged a little, and the fact that it was to-day veiled by a substantial shutter, proclaimed that its position in the world was that of a shop-front. The other windows were both smothered in stiffly-starched white lace curtains, between which a few leaves of geraniums were visible.

There were two doors, one on each side of the shuttered window. In somewhat weatherworn lettering, on a strip of black board, over that on the left of the window, was this inscription: "F. Johnson, Baker and Corndealet." It was at the other, the private door of the establishment, that Dr. Meredith had knocked.

For a moment or two his knock was unanswered. He stood tapping one foot on the ground with an impatient movement, while the gratified church-goers came a few slow paces nearer to him. Then his patience seemed to give out, and he knocked again sharply. This time the knock was answered at once.

"Very sorry, sir, I'm sure," said a breathless, good-natured looking woman. "The baby was crying, sir, I didn't hear; and Johnson, he always does lie a bit late, Sundays."

"Is——"

Dr. Meredith paused, and a little flush mounted into his face.

"Is—my assistant in?" he said abruptly.

"Yes, sir; I'm wishful to do my best for the gentleman, sir. I hope he'll find himself satisfied, sir."

Without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Johnson then entered upon a hasty and somewhat confused explanation of the reasons why she had not been able to take away "the young gentleman's breakfast things." The reasons consisted of the claims which the aforesaid baby was still mentioning in loud cries from the back; and with Dr. Meredith's quickly-spoken, "I'm sure it is all right, Mrs. Johnson. This door, I suppose?" she retreated rapidly to still the same.

Dr. Meredith knocked at a door on the right of the stone-flagged passage, and apparently received an answer, for he turned the handle and entered.

"Good morning!" he said shortly, and with the manner of a man who grudges even the civilities which his good breeding demands.

It was a small, square room, producing at first an effect of being furnished wholly with starched curtains and a brilliantly

crimson carpet, partly hidden by yellow oil-cloth strips. A horsehair sofa and "suite" of chairs draped in antimacassars asserted their presence later; and then a table with a green cloth, and a breakfast tray across one end, and a very stiff, uncomfortable arm-chair by the window, were seen to be the further details the room possessed.

In the very stiff, uncomfortable arm-chair was Dr. Meredith's assistant. The grey-clad figure was disposed at the most comfortable angle the chair allowed, and its possessor appeared to be absorbed in the enjoyment of a yellow-backed novel.

At the sound of the opening door, Althea Godfrey had looked up; at the sound of Dr. Meredith's "good morning," she had looked back at it and turned over a page; at the sound of his footsteps crossing the room, she laid it down slowly and looked at him.

"Good morning!" she responded; and then she promptly took up the book again.

It is a decidedly discomfiting experience to call upon a person who neither asks you to sit down, nor shows any immediate intention of holding any conversation with you. Dr. Meredith felt his position a little embarrassing; the more so, as he could not for the moment make up his mind what to do. He had come to a standstill on one of the yellow oilcloth strips near the window, and there he remained, holding his hat in his hand, and looking uncomfortable and decidedly at a loss.

His assistant turned over another page of the novel with a crackling deliberation. The sun streamed through the starched curtains hotly, falling short of the arm-chair, but falling full on Dr. Meredith. His much exercised mind hailed the sudden instinct to move out of the glare as an inspiration. He turned, and looked feebly about him for a chair. He found one, seated himself, and put his hat down all in silence; and in silence he gazed grimly at the picture on the cover of the yellow novel—a representation of a man and woman feeling some resentment towards each other. At least, the expression depicted on their countenances led to that conclusion.

Five minutes went by thus. Dr. Meredith had made up his own mind, that is to say as far as his first step in the interview was concerned. For some instants no page of the novel had been turned.

"You have come to your senses, I suppose, Jim?"

"You have come to your senses, of course, Althea?"

The two questions were fired off—for the way in which they were asked admits of no better description—absolutely simultaneously. But no trace of a smile at the coincidence appeared on either of the two faces steadily staring at each other. Each was waiting for the other's answer. None was forthcoming. Althea Godfrey closed her lips firmly. Dr. Meredith closed his slowly, and there was a pause, during which Dr. Meredith made a fidgety movement of impatience in his chair, and his assistant settled herself more comfortably in hers. She had laid the book on her knee, and she threw back her head now, and scanned the ceiling with an expression of coldly calm expectancy which would have chilled the battle ardour of a Bonaparte. Dr. Meredith felt first many sizes too large for the room; and then furiously angry with himself for feeling so. He dragged his chair a little further away, and with a gesture that meant many things: "I am absolutely determined, Althea!" he said firmly.

"Indeed!" was the answer, given without one movement of the handsome head from its position.

"I have been looking out trains," he added in a louder and slightly less firm tone.

"Indeed!"

"You will give up this lunatic plan, and be ready to leave here with me in time for the six-forty to town."

"It is very evident that you have not come to your senses, Jim."

Althea Godfrey moved her head and altered her position deliberately. As she spoke she sat very upright, her hands one on each arm of her chair.

"If you think," she said, "that the hours that have elapsed since I saw you have changed my mind, Jim, you're altogether mistaken. Here I am, and here I stay. I think I speak clearly?" she added, with a sarcastic inflexion in her voice.

"Quite!" he answered grimly, and then he paused and seemed for a moment to be somewhat dubiously casting about for words to go on with. "I shall be compelled," he went on at length, in a voice that seemed to try and supply the place of confidence by extra volume, "to take stronger measures. I am sorry to say this, Althea."

"What are they?" she said. "Do you contemplate taking me by my hair and personally dragging me out of Mary Combet? Do you think of urging on the populace to cast me forth as an impostor? Or do you think of summoning the arm of the

law to remove me forcibly? All of these courses are open to you, Jim. Let me recommend a simultaneous trial of the three. It would make an excellent advertisement for you, you know, besides disposing of me."

Dr. Meredith gasped and then choked in undignified and helpless wrath. His feelings were so far beyond the reach of any words that he could only, for some moments, sit staring at the upright figure opposite to him with a blankly vacant face which was growing a trifle pale with despair. At last he said, in a tone which held a curious mixture of aggressiveness and hopelessness:

"I do not intend, Althea, to leave this room until I have shown you the folly, the indescribable madness of this frame of mind on your part."

Althea Godfrey leaned back in her chair and crossed her feet carelessly. A tiny smile twitched the corners of her mouth, and she said coolly:

"I shall be delighted to have you stay, Jim, as long as you wish. Pray do so. But if you imagine that your presence will have the smallest effect on my intention, you were never more mistaken in your life. You will not mind," with a mischievous light in her eyes, "the fact that I have an engagement this morning, and must therefore leave you alone here. I am to be fetched to Orchard Court at twelve."

Althea spoke with a quiet calmness that was not without a suspicion of triumph. The words had a curious effect on her listener. All at once the arguing, angry, determined Dr. Meredith seemed to disappear, and quite another personality took its place. They had suggested to him the fact that she had, on the night before, seen one of his patients, and for the moment everything else was swept away in keen professional cares and interests. His face was as eager as his voice as he moved his chair with a jerk a little nearer to her, and said:

"You saw the Mainwaring child, then?"

"Yes."

"Much amiss?"

"The injuries are serious about the head and shoulders."

"It'll go on all right, I suppose? You don't mean that it's so serious as that?"

"Oh, no. It'll pull through with care, all right. But it will be frightfully disfigured, poor mite, I'm afraid."

"Disfigured!" Dr. Meredith's tone expressed compassionate concern. "That

poor, silly little Mrs. Mainwaring! what will she do! The child's beauty has been the chief delight of her heart. Conscious, is it!"

"No."

"Much better not."

During this short colloquy Dr. Meredith's changed personality seemed to have affected his assistant also, for she was as altered as he was. All her antagonistic attitude was in the background. She was interested, eager, and even cordial in voice and manner. She seemed to rely on his interest, and he to confide in her sympathy, as surely as if no difficulty or dissensions had ever been known between them. The two were for the moment one, resting securely on a common ground.

But the common ground was only a little tiny island in the sea of their contention. They stepped away from it, back into the deep water again with a unanimity that was almost ludicrous. Althea Godfrey resumed her coolly defiant resistance again instantly; Dr. Meredith became once again his irate, determined self.

She took up the yellow book as if it had been a weapon; he straightened himself as if to prepare for a charge. There was a little silence. Then she said airily:

"It must be getting on for twelve, now, I should think!"

"Do I understand then, Althea, that you are set upon following your own self-willed, senseless course?"

The question came sharply on her remark, but her answer followed more sharply yet.

"Without the adjectives, Jim, you do! I intend to stay here and help you; with your goodwill or without it."

"If I refuse to accept your help?"

"You can't! The whole place has heard of me as your assistant. Your own household have seen me in that capacity. You can't refuse work to me without any reasons after that, and you equally cannot give your reasons!"

There was in her voice a half-mocking inflexion of triumph, which, together with the dreadful conviction that her words were

true, exasperated Dr. Meredith's insecure self-control to a point beyond his power of restraint.

"I think," he said in a voice tremulous with the rage which he could no longer keep out of it, "I think, Althea, that if your convictions of duty and propriety are so diametrically opposed to mine, we are scarcely likely to make each other's lives very happy."

"At this moment, we shouldn't make a placid household, certainly!" she retorted, looking up as she spoke with the quietest nonchalance into his working, angry face. "It's not I!" she added demurely.

Fired to greater passion by the sight of her unassailable coolness, Dr. Meredith struck the top bar of the nearest chair with his clenched fist.

"It will be your doing if we part over this!" he cried almost fiercely.

"I beg your pardon, Jim; it will be yours, distinctly! I never alluded to the subject, whatever I may have thought of the prospect before me since I have had the pleasure of knowing you better," she added, with a quick flash of her spirited grey eyes, which were full upon him. "Since you have so thoughtfully introduced it," she went on, "I may as well tell you at once that my views are precisely the same as yours."

"I am thankful to hear it," he said, looking hurriedly about him for his hat. This had somehow rolled behind a chair and established itself in a corner very difficult to get at.

His assistant's eyes twinkled audaciously, while Dr. Meredith awkwardly and angrily knelt down and proceeded to try and extricate it.

"Understand, Jim," she said, as he rose, crimson with wrath and stooping, his dusty hat in his hand, "the fact of our unsuitability to each other is the only one under heaven on which our views possibly can agree."

Without a word, he unceremoniously put on his dusty property just as it was, left the room, and left the house.

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Author of "Jean Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXV. FALLEN LOW.

FOR some time after Dora left them, Forster and Penelope went on without speaking a word, without even looking at each other, but they were intensely conscious of each other's presence. They soon forgot all about Dora, realising only that they were walking alone through the wood with the mystery of evening enfolding them around. It was more than a mile that they had to go before reaching the end of the path. Here a low stile had to be climbed, and Forster paused as if he were anxious to prolong the enchantment of the place and moment.

"Dora is right," he said at last, "we must go. I have stayed here too long. Do you know that I have never dared to tell you what brought me here?"

"No," said Penelope in a low tone. She was wondering at herself and at her own incapacity to feel proud.

"When I was lying ill with that fever at the settlement, I could not get your face out of my mind. I was angry with Philip for leaving you, though I knew at the same time that I had urged him to do so. I argued that if he loved you as you should be loved, he could not have left you, and I told him so."

"What did he say?" asked Penelope quickly.

"He said nothing. His silence gave consent. Then I reminded him how he

had sought you out, and how he had almost forced your consent to his suit."

"Did he answer?"

"Oh, he assented again. I was light-headed, perhaps, and said things which I had better have kept to myself. Philip only took refuge in silence. I urged him to come home with me, but he merely said that he must take my place. Tell me, Princess, what is the mystery of your—but I am taking a great liberty."

"Yes, but—but I would rather you knew it. I told Philip all the truth. I did not love him."

"But then, why——?"

"My uncle is bound to me with a love which is more to me than a father's love. He did everything for me when my own parents neglected me. He told me he would choose my husband. I agreed, and—he chose Philip."

Forster's whole face expressed surprise.

"You never loved him!"

"No, the law made me Philip's wife, that is all," and she raised her head proudly.

"But did Philip know it? Did he know you did not love him?"

"Yes, Philip knew it. He believes——"

"He never said a word."

"He cannot, I have never deceived him. He deceived himself. He has——"

"I never knew," murmured Forster, "I did not guess, I thought he was to blame, that——"

Forster walked slowly on along the narrow path, where but one person could walk, and he now saw all the tremendous danger he had run into. He felt he must be alone, so presently he paused again.

"Do you think Dora is coming back? I had forgotten her. It is getting dusk, I must go back for her. I must go at once. You had better not wait for me."

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There was a dull, aching puzzle of thought going on in Forster's mind. Philip was, then, not to blame. He felt almost sorry that his excuse was gone. On the other hand, Penelope Winskell was also a sufferer, and he loved her; but she was the slave of a principle, taught her by a proud, hard man. The Duke must have either gone against his conscience, or he must be devoid of all imagination. He had ruined two lives. All this passed through Forster's mind, as he strode back and once again reached the stile and plunged into the wood. He must be alone and think it out. "Philip" was the word that rang through his brain, as if the trees were calling it, and as if the evening breeze echoed it—"Philip."

If another had told him that he would ever covet his friend's wife, and love her with a love that was strong and incompatible with honour, he would not have believed it. Now he viewed the bare, naked truth unmasked; he loved her, and he was wronging Philip. Suddenly Penelope's words came back to him, bringing with them new temptation. She was Philip's wife only in name. The very thought filled him with despair. Could the law be somehow put away, and could two beings be thus saved from misery? To put against this was the other horrible thought that Penelope had vowed sacred vows, intending merely to benefit by Philip's money.

To a Bethune this was a revolting idea. Forster himself had always been above any covetous idea. He loved because he loved; poverty had no fears for him, but now he found himself loving a woman who had indeed stooped very low for money! On the other hand, it was impossible to think of Penelope and vulgar greed at the same moment. Her motive lay deeper, in a pride of the old house, a pride of family, a passionate rebellion against being swept away from the face of her own land, the land where she was bred and born, and where her ancestors had lived.

This was the strange puzzle which presented itself to him. For Penelope to remain in her present condition was, to him, a greater moral sin than it would be if she consented to give all up, and go far away with him. She was now taking Philip's money, she was deceiving the world, and she was deceiving herself; but what would the world say at the vulgar ending which Forster contemplated. They would hear that he had run away with his friend's wife. They would not know that by so doing he would be saving her from worse disgrace.

The law would relieve Philip of all obligation, and his money would revert to him. He would have suffered untold misery, but then what happiness could he expect in the future?

All at once there was a noise of breaking twigs. A man jumped across a narrow ditch and stood before him. Forster recognised Jim Oldcorn.

"Good evening, sir! You've cum a bit late to see the land. Oim late myself, but awm seeking the master."

"I was looking for my sister; she stayed behind to pick some ferns," said Forster.

"The lady missed her way. She didn't mind what she wad duaken. It's loik the master. He's very difficult of mindin'."

"You mean the King?"

"Ause, the King. o' Rothery; he noo king o' his mind, he's a stupid baboon at toimes, with his immagin' and money gettin'."

"There's been changes at the Palace," said Forster, hardly knowing what he said.

"So there be, gran' servints and the loike; but it's onnatural. The King can't alter it. To be sure he cud turn 'im out; but, hooiver, he takes to lauffin and says he cud be rich as ony of them."

"His brain is turned, I fear, since the loss of his son?"

"That's it, sir. The law calls he mad, but he's cannily sharp at toimes. I mun tell ye his idea. He says he's gotten money hidden away, and he keeps looking and looking. Oh! 'is varra crazy. I mun go on, sir, and seek him, for he gave me the slip to-day."

"If you see my sister, Oldcorn, perhaps you'll be good enough to set her on the right way. I ought to have met her before now."

Oldcorn assented, then adding that the King was sure to take another path than the one they were on, he plunged deeper into the wood and disappeared.

Forster now decided to go back to the spot where he had left Dora, and then to return to the Palace in case he had missed her.

He had not gone very far when he was suddenly aware of a strange, hobbling figure approaching him. He knew at once it must be the truant King, but he, too, was startled by the first sight of Penelope's father.

The old man looked more like an evil gnome than a gentleman of long descent; and certainly the idea of kingship was almost ludicrous in connection with the crippled figure attired in patched and dirty fustian.

Forster determined not to speak to him unless he spoke first, so he courteously turned off the path to let the old man pass him.

But the King had other intentions; he peered at him with the evil look of some fictitious being, and suddenly seized his arm.

"Have you seen Oldcorn? Which way did he go?"

Forster took off his hat and answered quietly:

"Your servant took a path which crosses this one five or ten minutes farther back."

The King laughed immoderately, and rolled out a string of oaths which made Forster recoil. This was Penelope's father! The thing seemed an impossibility.

"He'll be in a fine way. Ah! I've given him the slip. But I've had a young lady as my companion. Your sister. Hey! Don't be frightened. I've not done her any harm. She's a useful girl. Tell me, don't they say up there that I'm crazy?"

"Yes, sir," said Forster impatiently, for he was now really anxious about Dora.

"Don't believe a word of it. Crazy! Never was saner in my life. I've found it. Ah! I can laugh at them now. I can do you a good turn, too, for your sister's sake, because she's a useful girl, and she isn't silly or afraid. Listen."

"If you'll excuse me, sir, I must go on and find my sister. She is not accustomed to be alone in this wood."

"Hang your southern politeness! The girl's gone home, I tell you. She's gone to the Palace—my Palace. Eh! It's you I want. You are not here for nothing. Eh! No one comes here without some purpose."

"I came on a visit, sir. If you object——"

"I'm no one now, of course not. I'm mad—but I can see some things. You're in love with my girl. Oh, I've seen you. I know the soft ways of your fine gentleman. Penelope is caught this time; she's in love with you. Hang the girl, why did she marry that other fellow? Let him go—a mere tradesman. Do you think Penelope will ever care for him? Never, I know the Winskell pride."

"Excuse me, sir," put in Forster indignantly, "but you are speaking of my friend, one of the noblest men on earth."

"A man with no pedigree! Do you know what our pedigree can show? None of your bastard business. An old true pedigree, one that makes you south English nobility wince—and now it's lost, lost."

It seemed ridiculous to hear this tattered,

crippled man boast of a pedigree, and yet it was true, the Winskells could put many kingly descents to shame.

"I despise pedigrees," exclaimed Forster angrily; "what does long descent mean, except to be more of gentleman than others who are less well born, and why does accident of birth make one free to be false and to counsel crime?"

Forster paused, he was his own accuser and his own judge.

"I must go on and find my sister," he added, calming down.

"Ah! you hot-tempered gentleman, so you wince, do you? You don't mind holding the rod and letting the fish dangle, but you won't bring it to land! You draw fine distinctions, so do the poachers here when they snare my game, but I'm even with them and with the thieves who steal my sheep. Look you, young man, they go and alter the mark on my lambs' ears, but they don't know I put another on 'em. Get along with you. A fine hero you make!"

Sosaying the King hobbled off, apparently in high displeasure, leaving his guest smarting under his words. It is truth, not falsehood, that offends.

Forster had fallen from his high pedestal, and now he knew it. All these past days, seeming so beautiful, so delicious, he had been false to his professions, but now his eyes were open. Even a selfish old man like this swearing King of Rothery saw through him.

He was suddenly stopped in the rush of assailing thought by the sight of the disturbed earth, on which still lay a clump of uprooted ferns. Here Dora had stopped, and something had prevented her from finishing her work. He stooped down and noticed his own handkerchief lying there forgotten. Then another assailing thought struck him. He had brought Dora here, and he had allowed her to be in close contact with ideas far removed from all he had ever taught her. This thought seemed almost more terrible to him than even his own backsliding. Dora—whose mind was as pure as crystal, with no stain to be found in it—had been brought by him to witness his own sin. His sister! Ever since she could lisp and toddle she had followed him, and believed in him.

"We must go," he said aloud, rising quickly, "we must go from this place of evil enchantment," but he added in a low voice, lulled by the sweet sound of the words, "My Princess, my Princess, cannot I take you with me?"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PENELOPE, too, was living in a land of enchantment. She was sitting by the open window, with her hands crossed on her lap, gazing out into the gathering twilight, when she heard a knock at her door and Dora rushed in. Her dress was torn and muddy, her hair dishevelled, and her eyes looked troubled.

"So you have come back, dear. Where did your brother find you, Dora?"

"He didn't find me. Where is he?"

"He went to look for you, but he will guess you are safe. What is the matter, Dora?"

The girl sank on a low footstool near the Princess.

"Oh! dear Princess, I am glad I am back here again. I met your father in the wood."

Penelope looked a little disturbed.

"Did he frighten you? His mind is quite astray. Even Jim Oldcorn cannot always keep him in sight, now that he is better able to walk. You must not take any notice of his words."

"But I could not help it; and oh, Princess, he made me promise not to tell any one."

"To tell what?" said Penelope impatiently.

"Where all that gold is concealed."

The Princess laughed.

"That is an old craze of his, dear. He fancies there is hidden treasure on the estate. As if uncle would not have known it! He is always——"

"But I saw it—yes, I saw it, Princess. It is not a dream. I am awake. See, I am really awake! But I must not tell you where it is—only I saw it, I may say that."

Penelope rose slowly from her chair and almost shook Dora. She held her arm firmly as if she would, as if she must know the truth.

"Dora, you are dreaming. It is false. We are poor, very poor. We have long been unable to—— till I married, I mean."

"Then perhaps it was your husband's money which the King had hidden, if he is not in his right mind; but, indeed, dear Princess, don't be angry with me; I saw it, indeed I did."

Dora felt quite confused by Penelope's excitement.

"Some brass coins he took you in with. The tradition is false, utterly false. If it

had been true my uncle would long ago have found it out. Do you think he would have sacrificed his life, my life, for a falsehood? No, no, I did it for him, and for uncle."

Penelope, who was so seldom excited, now seemed to forget she was talking to a girl who knew nothing of her secret, and Dora was struck dumb with astonishment. After her past fright she still felt a little unnerved, and this seemed the last blow.

"I am very sorry I mentioned it, Penelope, I never guessed you would mind. Why should you? If it is true you will be richer for the discovery, and if it is not true, then some one ought to prevent the King hiding his own money away."

"Where is it?" asked Penelope, more quietly.

"I mustn't tell that. I promised, but—but——"

"And you expect me to believe it! Nonsense."

Dora stood up very straight and raised her head slightly. In spite of Forster's long striving after perfect equality, he had not quite made his sister forget she was a Bethune.

"I have never told a lie in my life," said the girl.

The words recalled Penelope at last to the duty of politeness.

"Forgive me. Yes, I do believe you saw something, but not gold, not anything that is really of consequence."

"I saw gold, but of course I cannot tell how much it was, or whether the papers were important. I know the place where it is hidden, and I have promised not to show it. You know a promise is binding, isn't it?"

"No, a thousand times no, if we have made it under a wrong impression," said Penelope vehemently.

Dora shook her head.

"I made the promise, no one can release me but himself."

"You don't understand, Dora. My father has lost his senses. He is not responsible."

"Oh! I couldn't, I couldn't break my promise. What would Forster think of me? Ask him, he will tell you that I never have broken my word. He used to teach me when I was a child, that a Bethune had never been known to do such a thing."

A gong sounded through the Palace, and Dora started up.

"I must go and dress for dinner. I

am so untidy. Penelope, don't be angry with me. If I could tell you, you know I would do so."

"It is of no consequence," said Penelope, and then Dora disappeared as the maid came in with a message.

Before she went downstairs, Penelope looked at herself in the great pier glass. She knew she was beautiful; and now she cared about her beauty, because Forster loved her. But to-night she thought, was this really true about the hidden wealth? It could not be true; such things happened only in books, not in real life. But if it were true; if it turned out that she had sacrificed herself in vain—in vain! That would be too cruel of her father. Had he known all the time? She clenched her hands, feeling she could not forgive him. But perhaps it was not true. It was some childish play with which Dora had been taken in. Then again, suppose it were true? She could be free of Philip. She might—but how? Was there no way but with disgrace? Only the opinions of the world to fight against. Far away in some foreign country with Forster, who would care, or who would know? But how could she think of such a thing? She, a Princess, descended from a line of Kings, how could she stoop so low? What people said could not matter; for Forster's sake she would brave the world's displeasure. He would understand why she had acted as she had done.

He had left her suddenly this evening. Was he glad or sorry? He could not be sorry that his love was returned. But Philip was his friend, and Forster was so true.

Then she had to go downstairs, and to meet her uncle in the hall as if nothing had happened. Another discovery she made. She began to feel differently towards the man whom all her life long she had worshipped and obeyed. It was through him she was now so miserable—oh, so miserable! She cared now more for a human creature than for the honour of the old house. Was she false?

Forster was in late, and apologised for his tardy appearance. He and his sister compared notes about the wood paths, and Dora merely explained her late arrival by reason of her having missed her way.

The Duke, undisturbed by any unusual events, was as calm and as courteous as usual. He was quite punctilious about etiquette, now that he was able to gratify his fastidiousness. To see his niece beauti-

fully dressed, and becomingly waited upon, was a real pleasure to him.

After dinner the Princess came and sat in the drawing-room, and Dora played on the piano as she saw that Penelope was silent and did not care to talk.

Presently Penelope drew back the heavy curtain and looked out over the glen, now lighted by the pale, misty moonlight.

How was she to find out the truth of that discovery? How? She must know, but only Dora knew. How like her father in his crazy conceit to tell the stranger! Could there be any truth in it? The question appeared to her now one of immense magnitude. If she could rid herself of all her obligations to Philip, if she might be free to—to— she turned round suddenly to Dora, and called her softly.

Dora left the piano and came to her friend.

"Tell me again, dear. You saw the gold, and my father told you not to tell me where it is?"

"Yes, indeed it is true."

"I know I can believe all you say; but how can I believe my father? Dora, you don't know, you don't understand my strange life. You, who have always been happy with your own people."

"Poor Princess," said Dora gently; "you have had a lonely life."

"Lonely! Oh, yes, very lonely! My mother never cared for young people. She did not understand them. My father—you have seen him. When his mind was clear he was always eccentric, and my brother was the same. I was alone, quite alone, except for my dear uncle. He taught me, he trained my mind, and made me understand what I had to remember all my life long. I was a Princess by right of our ancient family. The honour of the house depended on me, for he saw that everywhere the property was going down in value, and that some day we should be beggars. He has often spoken to my father about it, but he only scoffed at him. Then we resolved, my uncle and myself, to bear the burden. He proved to me that I must do as he told me, and I think he is the only man I ever obeyed. But if all our self-sacrifice were useless, if all this time we were rich— Oh, you can't really understand it, Dora; but if it is so, I—I cannot forgive my father. Tell me where this money is hidden."

"I must not, indeed I must not, dear Princess," said Dora, much distressed. "Let

me ask the King about it, and see if he will release me from my promise."

Penelope shook her head.

"You could not find him now. He may have gone to the farm. I do not know where he is."

"I will go to the wood to-morrow; he may be there again," said Dora. "And I will ask him to let you see the place, but otherwise I must not, I must not."

Then Forster and the Duke came in, and the latter, knowing nothing of the strange complication, was as cheerful and as courteous as ever.

Forster saw that the Princess was rather silent and absorbed. This new mood in her made him forget his previous misgiving. He was once more absorbed by the one idea. How was he to save her from her miserable marriage? How could he rescue her from the power of this mad father? The King's words rang through his ears. The temptation seemed to grow stronger. To fly away, anywhere with her, to take her where life was less complicated, and where the world—he had never cared much for the world, so this was easy to him—should not touch them with its evil words and its scorn; that would be happiness.

The evening wore slowly away, and Dora, saying she was tired, went to bed earlier than usual. Penelope followed, but Forster stopped her for one moment as he lighted her candle.

"I met your father," he said, holding her hand, which now she did not even try to take away.

"You, too! Oh, what did he say?" she asked, blushing deeply.

"He was excited about—something or other. He knows that—that——"

"He knows nothing—nothing," said Penelope proudly.

"He has found out our secret," said Forster, forgetting prudence. "He knows that——"

"He might have made me free, once," she said slowly. "Now I must know, I must. Good night. To-morrow——"

"To-morrow we ought to leave you, Princess; I must take Dora home. But tell me, what shall I do afterwards? You must decide. Dearest, we were made for each other. Why did you let the miserable gold turn you away?"

"Because I was bound to do it," said Penelope slowly. "But surely there is some way out of all this. Good night. I hear uncle's step, and I must go and find my father."

"Where?"

"Somewhere. I must find him. He may be at the farm, or somewhere here. He must tell me before—before you go."

She hurried to her own room, and sending away her maid, she dressed herself in out-of-door attire. If Dora would not tell her, then her father must do so. But first she must wait till all the servants were gone to bed. State and modern civilisation necessarily include a certain bondage; the eyes and ears about us must be thought about.

When silence reigned Penelope cautiously opened her door and went downstairs. She walked along the haunted passage and distinctly heard the footsteps following her. To-night she was afraid. For the first time in her life she almost turned back, then full of another idea she scorned the ghost and proceeded. "I must see my father, I must," she repeated. She went to the old wing and knocked at the King's door. No one was there. Then she resolved to go to the farm where he often slept, and where Oldcorn had taken up his abode. She would, she must find him, and if it were true that they were rich, she would tell Philip that he must release her. The sin was not hers. A legal sin was one only in the eyes of the world, a thing not to be considered at all. Forster had asked her what he should do, and she would tell him. She had always loved him, she had loved none but him. Her uncle must answer for the rest.

More excited than she had ever been in her life before, she took the road to the farm. It was on the near outskirts of the wood they had gone through in the afternoon. She was almost sure to find her father there. That interview would finish this uncertainty, it must finish it. She could have gone blindfolded, but the moon was rising, and she could see the path like a pale track in the midst of gloom. On and on she went, till at last she reached the old cottage-like building called the farm. Great barns were built around it, and the wood threw its shadow over all the buildings.

She hurried to the door and tapped at the low window.

There was an answer. It was in her father's voice.

"Who wants me?"

"I do, let me see you for a few moments; I must."

She looked through the window, and saw the old man cowering over the fire. He often did not go to bed till daylight.

"Come in, then," he said sulkily.

"Where is Jim Oldcorn?" was her first question.

"In bed and asleep. Come in if you must."

"I must," she said, shutting the door behind her.

The King looked at her suspiciously and maliciously, then laughed as he pointed to a chair.

"What do you want me for, eh, girl?"

"I want to know if it is true?"

"What's true?"

"The gold you showed to that young girl—is it true we are rich, is that gold ours?"

"Ah! so you care to ask me now, do you? You never believed it in the old days. True, she saw it, didn't she tell you?"

"I know, but I don't believe it."

He laughed again.

"Then go your own way, and leave me to go mine. Out with you, I say," and with a volley of curses he pointed to the door. The mad fit was upon him. Penelope saw the evil gleam in his eyes. It was no use staying longer. The King was as obstinate as others of his race, and now he was barely answerable for his actions.

"It's not true," she said as she rose to go.

But the King only laughed.

LINCOLN'S INN.

A ONCE popular distich neatly sums up the salient features of the four Inns of Court:

Gray's Inn for walks, Lincoln for a wall,
Inner Temple for a garden, Middle for a hall;

and no one can approach Lincoln's Inn from the "Fields" without acknowledging the justice of the saying. There you have wall, nothing but wall, without any crannied hole or chink through which a modern Pyramus and Thisbe could converse. It is the garden wall of the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn, and above it rise proudly the high-pitched roofs of the modern hall and library—creditable piles of red brick of which the builders have no cause to be ashamed. But they cover a good space of the old garden which was formerly one of the delights of the Inn; and it still looks green and pleasant, the still remaining stretch of green sward fringed with flowerbeds, where gaudy tulips and fragrant hyacinths show brightly in the spring sun-

shine. And in that distant corner under the great wall, there has been some attempt at landscape gardening to hide the ugly uniformity of the brick enclosure. Would that it could be made to walk away, like the wall in Quince's interlude!

True, there is a gate in the wall, a poor, feeble, modern gateway, that offers to foot passengers a short cut to Chancery Lane. And it is from the side of the lane that Lincoln's Inn is best approached, beneath the fine old gateway that still remains as one of the landmarks of old London. The lane itself is fast changing its appearance. From behind the hoardings which have so long obstructed the narrow footway by Roll's Yard, has arisen a towering pile of offices. Big buildings are being pushed forward in all directions; huge printing-offices occupy the sites of old sponging-houses; and the old taverns, that once were the haunts of lawyers and clerks in chancery, are now the resort of newspaper men, reporters, and the myriad servants of the press. But Lincoln's Inn Gateway still holds its own, with its dark, grimy towers and gloomy flanking buildings, all of the fashion of an age when the defensive possibilities of a structure were not altogether lost sight of.

For when the gate was built in the reign of Henry the Seventh, people still remembered stout Sir John Fortescue, whose decision in "Thorpe's case" was familiarly quoted even to our own days. Sir John, who had been of Lincoln's Inn, till he was made King's Serjeant, and who was afterwards Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor, for all his legal dignities and venerable years, laid about him lustily at Towton fight, and only joined his Royal mistress in her flight when the day was hopelessly lost. And long after the gate had settled on its foundations, we shall find a Queen's attorney having a brush with rebels, not only by writ, but "vi et armis."

But if the flanking towers are heavy and gloomy, the gateway itself is dignified and comely; with its date, 1518, and three handsome shields carved over the opening, old De Lacy's rampant lion on the left, with the arms of the reigning Tudor Monarch in the middle, and those of Sir Thomas Lovel on the other side—the last a great benefactor to the Inn, and liberal also to the church, of whom it is written:

All the nunes of Holywell
Pray for the soul of Sir Thomas Lovel.

The chamber over the gate, tradition says, was once occupied by Oliver Crom-

well, but there is no record to show for it. He was a frequent visitor anyhow, for passing through the gate you find in the corner of the old buildings a low-browed doorway leading to nests of chambers; and here assuredly once lived Thurloe, Cromwell's private secretary. John Timbs tells a story of Oliver visiting his secretary, and discussing with him a plan for assassinating Prince Charles and the Duke of York, who were then exiles in Holland. The hour is late, and the pair believe themselves to be alone in the building, when Mr. Secretary's secretary is discovered, asleep apparently, in an anteroom. He may have overheard the plot, and the sleep may be feigned; and Cromwell, drawing his sword, proposes to kill him, and thus "make sikar." But Thurloe shows how calmly the youth is sleeping, unconscious of the threatening sword, and begs his life. The youth had been wide awake, however, and presently revealed the plot to friends of the Royal exiles, who were thus put upon their guard.

The old buildings of the Inn, which were not finished till many years after the gateway, are continued into Old Square, with curious turret staircases and small, ill-lighted chambers. But the occupants of these last have the privilege of reflecting that they sit in the seats of the great legal luminaries of other days. For Lincoln's Inn has always been a nursery of great lawyers, and was long ago described as "one of the Hospitia Majora, such as receive not gudgeons and smelts, but the polypuses and leviathans, the behemoths and the giants of the law." If there are ghosts anywhere stirring, surely it must be in these old chambers; where of old, when in the flesh, they worked by day and caroused by night, spending their whole lives in the Inn, perhaps feasting in the old hall, dancing round about the big fire, holding their moots and pursuing their accustomed revels, till such time as the sexton of the Inn raised the great flagstone in the chapel crypt, and the worthy Benehar mingled his dust with that of the mighty men of old.

The old hall, scene of all the mootings and feasting, seems to be of Henry the Eighth's time, and it was probably while it was building that "rare old Ben" worked as a bricklayer at the Inn, if Fuller is to be believed, "with a trowel in one hand and a book in the other." Since the new hall was opened in 1843 the old place has been used for courts: at one time for the Vice-Chancellors—comfortable, cosy courts, where ancient gentlemen, perhaps a little blind

and not a little deaf, would make believe to listen to the prosings of other elderly gentlemen, who imparted a congenial dryness to all sorts of subjects, from the marriage of an interesting ward of court, to the infringement of a patent for a garden roller. As for where the Lord Chancellor sat, he might have to be hunted from court to court like a broody hen; but his favourite seat was certainly in Lincoln's Inn, which was always somehow or other affiliated to the equity side of the temple of justice. There are no more Vice-Chancellors; Chancery itself has been knocked out; the great building in the Strand has swallowed up our snug little courts, as the lean kine ate up the fat, yet still the Inn seems to carry on the same business under another name. To-day the hall door is garnished with a programme of lectures in a "legal education" course, and through the windows can be seen the gingerbread canopy that of old was "de rigueur" for a seat of justice.

The new hall is still used as a kind of overflow court from the big building, and something seems to be going on there to-day, judging from the number of people with bags and bundles of papers who are making their way along the garden path towards the hall. The garden itself is reserved for members of the "Society," who never use it. But it forms a convenient short cut to an entrance in Stone Buildings, that abuts upon Holborn, and a man of resolution, who knows the way, may pursue it unchallenged; but should he hesitate and falter, he will be politely turned back by a porter, who guards his grassplate as Betsy Trotwood guarded hers, or like the dons of Oxford, where undergraduates are concerned.

It is a wonderful garden that, if only for its history, which has been disinterred from ancient records by painstaking archaeologists. As everybody knows, Lincoln's Inn takes its name from the Earl of Lincoln, one Henry De Lacy, who had his inn or residence here, where once the Black Friars had dwelt, in a house looking upon Holborn, with a fine garden which perhaps the good Benedictines had laboured to form. Anyhow, in De Lacy's time, which was that of the first Edward, the garden of his London house flourished apace, and brought him a good profit, while he was following his lord the King in the Welsh and Scottish wars. Fruits alone brought in a profit, handsome for those days, of some nine pounds a year, for apples, pears, cherries, walnuts, and the minor fruits of the garden;

cuttings of the vine were sold, and roses too, as buttonholes for the good citizens, if they had buttons in those days; there were pretty girls, anyhow, to wear them in their bosoms. Beans of sorts, onions, garlic, leeks, were cultivated, and it might have been one of De Lacy's gardeners who introduced the leek into Wales. For the Earl of Lincoln's Inn had acquired, by the King's favour, a rich lordship in the vale of Clwyd, and there he built the strong castle of Denbigh, over whose ruined arch his mutilated effigy still presides "in his stately long robes."

Some say that the Earl himself was something of a lawyer, and that he invited other gentlemen of the long robe to occupy a portion of his inn. But the Bishops of Chichester had something to say in the matter, for their town house occupied part of the site of Lincoln's Inn. Chichester Rents and Bishop's Court still preserve the memory of their former owner—narrow passages devoted to taverns, eating-houses, law-stationers, law-printers, and other trades more or less serviceable to the adjoining legal hive. Both these courts have common issue, by a sort of back door, to Lincoln's Inn, and form a kind of run for lawyers' clerks, who skip in and out of the legal warren like rabbits. Indeed, there is altogether, and especially when the courts are sitting, a considerable stir and "come and go" about the old Inn. Barristers in wigs and gowns, others in every day costume, whom gate-keepers and porters respectfully salute—now an Attorney-General hastening to his chambers, or a Q.C. in rustling silk. And with these a constant stream of vivacious lawyers' clerks, who make the vaulted passages resound as they recount their exploits, perhaps with the Masters about costs, or with the governor about being late in the morning, for they all are given to cutting it fine, like Mr. Lowten of Pickwickian fame. Others, too, abrupt and absorbed, managing clerks, who consider themselves, and perhaps justly, as the men who really drive the legal machine, while all the others, wigs and gowns, ushers and silk purses, are so many puppets:

The seals and maces dance before them!

Then there are the young legal exquisites of the day, such as would formerly have cast a lustre upon the dusty chambers of Mr. Serjeant Snubbin. But the last of the Serjeants has been marched off by the grimmeest Serjeant of all. They were wide awake, those Serjeants, and sold their Inn

and pocketed the proceeds with marvellous adroitness.

But the Serjeant, "dans son vivant," was always a notable figure in Lincoln's Inn, although strictly speaking, according to ancient usage, he had no status there; for on becoming a Serjeant a member quitted the society, which discharged him with a handsome breakfast, a purse of ten guineas, and a pair of Oxford gloves—the gloves of Woodstock were surely sold within living memory—rang him out to the ting-tang of the old chapel bell.

The bell, in its little pigeon-cote of a turret, has a history of its own. It was given to the Inn, it is said, by Dr. Donne, who was with the Earl of Essex at the taking of Cadiz, and brought home the bell, which had doubtless hung in some convent belfry or high church tower. And every now and then its ancient voice is heard, when some great lawyer has gone to his rest, as it did the other day for Lord Bowen, when the chapel was crowded with brethren of the robe and friends of the late Judge. The chapel itself is a plain but not uncomely building of Jacobean Gothic, the architect indeed having been no other than our old Welsh friend, Inigo Jones. It was consecrated in 1623, and Dr. Donne preached to a great concourse on the occasion. As Pennant wrote—who is a capital guide to eighteenth-century London—"it is built upon massy pillars and affords under its shelter an excellent walk."

Under the chapel, indeed, was long a favourite promenade, for lawyers who were looking out for clients,

Or wait for customers between
The pillar rows in Lincoln's Inn,

and for worshipful gentlemen like Mr. Samuel Pepys of the Admiralty, who reports having walked there at the time the new garden was being laid out. Yet it is a shivery, chilly kind of place—an open-air crypt indeed, with a handsome groined roof above, and gravestones underneath, flat slabs on which are recorded the names of ancient Benchers and once famous lawyers who sleep beneath. Of these the most generally known is William Prynne, who lost his ears or part of them for writing scandal about Queen Henrietta—a Star Chamber matter—but who lived to be as great a plague to Cromwell as he had been to Charles, and died long after the Restoration. A short and simple epitaph records his career, but the author

of "Hudibras" has given us a more ample one :

Here lies the corse of William Pryune,
A benchet once of Lincoln's Inn,
Who restless ran through thick and thin.

But whilst he this hot humour tugs,
Death fang'd the remnant of his lugs.

Another noted Lincoln's Inn man of the period was Lord Shaftesbury, the Achitophel of Dryden's "Hind and Panther," one of the keenest intellects of the age, who from the woolstack just missed the axe of the executioner, and who died a fugitive, when a few years more life might have restored him to even higher dignities. Another earlier Lincolnite was Lord Chancellor Egerton, the founder of a powerful family. And the Mores, of whom was the famous Chancellor Sir Thomas, who lost his head in good earnest, had been of Lincoln's Inn for generations. Philip Yorke, too, who held the seals so long that his wife made the gold-embroidered purses borne before the Chancellor into a splendid quilt or coverlid; and Lord Talbot, his successor, who kept up the ancient revels with great gusto. Lord Mansfield, the incorruptible, with many other great lawyers, hailed from Lincoln's Inn, and are remembered in the blazoned windows of the chapel.

The newer part of the Inn has not, perhaps, much history to boast of. New Square, indeed, is only comparatively new, having been built in 1682 by Henry Serle, who is remembered in the adjoining Serle Street. The site was not definitely part of the Inn, having been known as Feckett's Field, and once the jousting-ground of the Knights Templars from over the way. But it is handsomely if plainly built of good red brick, and the gateway in the corner leading into Carey Street is a pleasant, comely structure. People lived in the Inn in the early days of New Square, or Serle's Court, as it was then called, and the first inhabitant was one Cavendish Weedon, who contrived the "pillar fountain and ornaments" that once occupied the centre of the grass-plot. There is no fountain now to rival that of the Temple with its pleasant, cooling stream.

Formerly, long ago, in Earl Henry's time, there was a pond in Lincoln's Inn, and the bailiff bought fry, and frogs, and eels for the great pike that lurked beneath its weedy banks. Where the new hall now stands was a coney-garth—a rabbit-warren, it seems, for the students of the Inn were forbidden to hunt there with bows, arrows, or darts. As to when the pond was

filled up there is no evidence to show, and the rabbits have followed the great pike into the ewigkeit. But the sporting proclivities of the law students and the young barristers of the Inns of Court have lasted to our own days. There was always a trouble in managing these young gentlemen. They would wear long rapiers, and could hardly be persuaded to come into hall with only a dagger at their backs, which was enough surely for their occasions, especially as there were plenty of carving-knives about. Their doublets, too, would be of a richness and colour unsuited to the sober profession of the law. All kinds of sumptuary edicts were made and broken to restrain their extravagance. Nor would the young fellows always dance to the piping of their elders. One Candlemas the junior barristers were put out of commons, because they would not dance before the Judges who had come to share in the revels. Though the coifed and ermined seniors could foot it bravely on occasion :

The judge to dance his brother serjeant calls ;
and Chancellors and Benchers danced "en ronde" about the hall, like so many of Robinson Crusoe's savages.

And if the law students of old were a trouble to their seniors, they were a terror to their more peaceable neighbours. "O the mad days that I have spent!" cries Mr. Justice Shallow, as he recalls the adventures of his student days. And against such—the unthrifths of the Inns of Court—the parishioners of St. Clement's keep watch and ward, while the recorder himself stands by St. Clement's Church to see the lantern hung out, and observe if he could meet with any of these outrageous scholars.

But the law students of to-day have lost these perhaps objectionable characteristics. No longer clustered together in inns and nests of chambers, they form no distinct element in the great mass of London life, and to be "reading for the bar" is compatible with the quietest domestic habits. It is only when dinners have to be eaten in hall that anything of the old verve of the law student manifests itself—and especially on a call-night, when perhaps an echo of the ancient joyous uproar may be heard. But there are no moots at the mess, and "arguing a short case of one point," as the newly-fledged were urged to do, would be regarded as an indication of lunacy. But as the dinner-hour approaches the old Inn puts on an appearance of decorous festivity. Cabs drive up and people hurry in from every quarter of the town. There are

swarthy Hindoos and yellow Chinamen, and perhaps a sable African among the crowd in which young, middle-aged, and even elderly students, men of every clime and race, as well as every age, are mingled in temporary fellowship. But the revels do not last long, and the Inn is soon left to its nightly repose; and if any of the old Benchers choose to walk out from under the crypt and pace up and down the garden walks in the moonlight, they will have the place to themselves, and may argue out their knotty points without fear of interruption, till cock-crow sends them all back to their narrow beds.

AIX-LES-BAINS OUT OF THE SEASON.

THE blue Bourget lake, with its grey mountains, is a gracious introduction to the celebrated town of baths. The railway from Culoz skirts the water for miles. My fellow passengers—a curé with a red face and large ears, a market lady with a basket, and a couple of blue-breeched privates of the Army of the Republic—all crane their necks in the direction of the lake. Its sapphire tint in the shallows is good to see. The reeds here and there stand motionless; and, by the same token, the woolly clouds which lie against the sides of the mountains that girdle the lake seem as if they were glued to the rocks. There is, in fact, no wind. The one little fishing-boat a mile or so from the shore—seeking the lavaret, a toothsome fish—is as steady as if it had ten cables holding it fast.

It is a morning such as Rousseau would have appreciated a hundred years ago. He loved Bourget and its neighbourhood; enjoyed here many of his characteristic ecstasies, and suffered also many of his no less characteristic despondencies. But in some respects it is a morning wasted, for Aix-les-Bains, whose red roofs and white houses are now showing much above the lake's level, is as nearly empty as ever it is in these days. It is not the season, in short. What that means to a town of but six or seven thousand resident inhabitants may be guessed. Many parts of London are much the same to the observant and the unobservant alike in June and September, although June is the London season and September is not the season. But little Aix gets its population trebled or so during the fashionable visiting months. Hence, out of the season, one must expect to see

villa after villa and hotels by the half-dozen shuttered and padlocked, and with no comfortable eddies of suggestive blue smoke from their shapely chimneys. It is rather a dismal sight, until one gets used to it.

Yet there are compensations in such a state of affairs. One misses the long array of gold-laced hotel porters outside the railway station, with their respective omnibuses, and one is almost glad to miss their confusing unanimous invitations. It is, moreover, a certainty that one's hotel bill will be about half what it would be in the season. Then the Casino is shut, and consequently the gaming tables are not open. This, too, may be pure gain, for though the spirit is often exceedingly strong in determining that its owner shall on no account risk his money at baccarat or aught else, the impetuous flesh quite as often insists that, "just for the fun of the thing, you know," there can be no harm in a little flutter. These little flutters are about the most expensive pastime going, and the dust and ashes they leave in the mouth are very disagreeable.

Two other compensations may be mentioned. There are people who run abroad in quest of fresh faces. They wish to get out of the eternal groove, and not to see for a week or two a single familiar acquaintance. Well, the odds are that when this is so they come plump against just the persons they wish least to see. It is especially likely to be so at Aix in the season; but out of the season the odds are overwhelming in the other direction. And lastly, if you are of a tender nature, you may in the season suffer a little, or more than a little, discomfort in beholding certain of the fashionable invalids who then come here to be patched and cockered into living another lively year or two. These picturesque yet unsettling wrecks of humanity go elsewhere when Aix's season is at an end. The commonplace peasants in blue blouses, and the white-capped women of the town are a deal better to see than these moribund millionaires and Princes of the blood.

At the hotel nearest the station I am welcomed as a gourmand greets a new potatoe in February. Season or no season this building is obliged to keep its doors open—I am compelled to suppose at a loss. I have the choice of all its bedrooms. Afterwards monsieur and madame wait upon me for instructions about the evening dinner. Their courtesy is remarkable even for France—even for Southern France. But monsieur's shoulders lift pathetically when

he learns that I am a mere bird of passage, in his house one day and in Italy the next. Still, it is a land of philosophy, this district to some extent consecrated to Rousseau, and I am none the less welcome for being so transitory a visitor.

In the meantime I have several hours of daylight on my hands. It is not the season, and therefore I cannot hope to find a steamer conveniently waiting by the lake to convey me to Hautecombe—that lonely Abbey which holds so much of the Royal dust of the House of Savoy. I have been up the hill of the Superga by Turin, and looked at the more modern tombs of this famous family, in company with the usual crowd of tourists. There I found the distant summits of the Alps more interesting than the cold vaults of the church. At Hautecombe, also, no doubt, the solitude and the lake, and the grey cloud-capped mountains would have been fully as impressive as the ancient mausoleums. But I cannot put it to the test.

The Grande Chartreuse is another "lion" of the district, though rather a remote one. In the season there are brakes and other public conveyances thither from Aix, with "reduced terms for a quantity." It is an enchanting excursion, but vexatious for the horses. I read the bills about it still on the walls of the town. They are, however, relics of the past season; wholly obsolete, yet not to be superseded until a new influx of visitors makes it necessary to print new notices. If I wish to visit the Grande Chartreuse out of the season, I must either go on to Grenoble by train, or else enjoy a lengthy colloquy with a local livery stableman.

Again, having walked up the Avenue de la Gare, and found my way into the public gardens—one nursemaid and one child are the only associates of its statuary—I look to the south and see one of the highest of the mountains capped with a cross. This, too, is a favourite resort in the season. Thither there is a rack and pinion railway—vivid illustrations of which adorn the stations far and wide round Aix. But the rack and pinion railway has suspended its functions. The snow is rather deep on the mountain-top. Indeed, there is snow in Aix itself, though I have not mentioned it earlier. The Aix snow looks quite out of place, and seems resolved to vanish as soon as possible. It has, in effect, disappeared in the little market square between the church, the great bath institution, and the so-called triumphal

arch. Here five energetic young women were thumping clothes in the washing-trough, which Aix's special facilities allow it to keep provided with warm water at no cost to any one. The steam of the hot springs disagrees with the snow. Nor is it much better elsewhere. The roads are in a state of slush. Nevertheless, these touches of evanescent white go well with the red roofs and the garish green and gold of some of the villa façades; and the pallid blue of the Aix sky domes the red roofs, the snow, and the dark mountains no less effectively.

There is nothing in the world to do but lounge aimlessly hither and thither, trusting to the chapter of accidents for diversion. The shop-windows are not alluring. At the booksellers' one notices that the Tauchnitz volumes are those of last season. The tarts in the pastrycooks' almost look as if they came under the same category. I enter a notable liqueur store, whence many a portly flask of Benedictine and bottle of Chartreuse, both green and yellow, have travelled to England. The dame who controls the shop—she is the shape of a Benedictine flask—seems surprised at the sight of a possible customer. She is, however, as thrifty as most Frenchwomen, and declines to abandon the bird in the hand for a possible bird at present in the bush: in other words, she continues her knitting even while she listens to my questions and makes her answers. Eventually we separate, "mutually desolated."

Thence I wander on to the portico of the "Etablissement Thermal." I may as well kill some time in going the round here; for the baths, unlike the hotels and Casino, are open perennially. Nature, in her supply of hot water—temperature one hundred and seven degrees and one hundred and sixty-three degrees respectively—knows nothing of fashionable seasons. She is as generous in mid-winter as in mid-summer, when the mere thought of entering a room full of torrid vapour is enough to raise the hair and bring beads of moisture to the skin. A woman appears to guide me. She sees at a glance that I am not a victim either to rheumatism or a skin disease, and therefore not likely to be a client. But she does her best with me notwithstanding. There seems no end to the various apartments, each with its arrangement of tubes for squirting water upon the patient in every conceivable direction. There are also large swimming baths, the water a pretty blue in colour. And there is an inhaling-

room, which the fancy may easily picture in the season furnished with its complement of the sick and the valetudinarian, gasping and sucking in the vapour for their lives' sake. Daudet, in "Numa Roumestan," has sketched these scenes for us with truth and vigour. The sight of the iron chairs in the empty chamber is, after "Numa Roumestan," enough inspiration. There is also the hottest place of all, a natural cave in the superstructure, whence nature vomits an insufferable sulphureous air into the building proper. This dark hole, into which one peep suffices, is, my guide tells me with a yawn, called Hell. Its temperature is certainly too warm for any one not wholly divested of earthly instincts. As a crowning pleasure, I am offered a saucerful of the sulphur-tainted drinking water. This, however, I decline. Even curiosity cannot tempt me to nauseate myself with this vile rotten-egg flavour. I disappoint my companion by my abstinence. No matter. I hope I soothe her later when I find myself again at the classic portico, and acknowledge, while thanking her for, her services.

From the baths I stroll into the outskirts of the town. I come to a gilded figure on a pedestal, with a few shrubs and plants round it, the whole enclosed by railings. This I learn is the "Eaux Vives Madonna." The figure is laced with tarnished rosaries, and some rotting crutches decorate its pedestal. There is a notice: "One is begged not to touch the plants and flowers." But the entire territory dedicated to the statue is scarcely three yards in diameter, so that it is difficult not to scoff a little at such a prohibition. Still, the enclosure is interesting. It reminds one that the poor and credulous come to Aix to be healed of their ailments as well as the rich of all kinds. The latter, however, are less likely to acknowledge a miraculous agency in their cures. The Eaux Vives Madonna is all very well for the poor, but the average millionaire puts more faith in the fees he pays his medical adviser, and the particular person who perspires in massaging him.

Aix is growing fast. It seemed an anomaly this day that so many palatial hotels and villas should be shut up, and that yet the noise of masons should be heard on all sides. The placard "terrain à bâtir" was the most conspicuous object in the suburbs. And in every vineyard or morsel of meadow thus offered for sale, there was the diverting auxiliary notice prohibiting sportsmen from

seeking game thereon. To a ribald Englishman it seemed as reasonable to issue such an injunction in St. Paul's Cathedral burying ground, as here on little fenced plots of ground cheek by jowl with hotels having their scores and hundreds of rooms. But it is a humorous way they have in France, where, it must be understood, a simple thrush or a melodious lark comes under the comprehensive heading of "game."

When I had viewed Aix's red roofs from several different standpoints, I returned in the fading light to the town. The church door was ajar, and I entered the building, which is unobtrusive and ugly enough. It was very gloomy inside, but I groped my way up the aisle until I touched a coffin. The coffin came upon me as a surprise, though in truth there was nothing about it to excite astonishment. The four large candles at its corners were unlit. A moment later I espied a single old woman on her knees, eyeing me through the rifts of her fingers while she covered her face in prayer. It was a commonplace occurrence. I sat for a while in the deepening gloom, looking at the old woman and the coffin. The former began to pray audibly, though always with her eyes watching me through her fingers. I suppose the funeral was for the morrow. The deceased was doubtless a native, though he might well be one of the few visitors who come hither for that new life which not even the Aix waters can give.

But it was chilly in the church, and I soon had a surfeit of it and its couple of inmates. Another hour passed in the Grand Café of Aix with a cigar. The room would have held a couple of hundred people. There were just three persons in it besides myself and the waiter, and these four stared at me when I entered as if I had been something extraordinary. I asked the waiter for a beverage commonly drunk at Continental cafés where people of several nations consort. He shrugged his shoulders. It was impossible, he said. In the season it was of course exceedingly possible, he hastened to add, but with snow on the ground—oh, no!

And so at length in the twilight I returned to monsieur and madame at my hotel. The good people had made notable efforts to rejoice their guest. A private apartment with a crimson and gold wall-paper had been prepared for me; there was a cheerful log fire, and a dozen candles were lit in the large glass chandelier. This alone was enlivening. The dinner was

even more so. It was served with down-right French taste. There was no one else in the building. All the cook's energies had been concentrated on this one eventful meal. That, at least, is how it was explained to me by monsieur, with a gratified smile, when he afterwards came to enquire about my digestion. Thus, for the sake of merely sensual comfort, it seemed to me that I had not done so much amiss to stop at Aix-les-Bains out of the season.

The next morning, however, I thought differently. I was called at five o'clock for the Turin express, which ought to have screamed into the station shortly before six o'clock. It was not a pleasant morning, even at Aix: cold and foggy, and of course dark to boot. The Aix station platform was moreover draughty in the extreme, and dull to a degree, in spite of the presence of two stout priests whose aspirations and luggage were directed towards Rome. We three, the priests and I, paced that miserable platform till half-past seven, waiting for the wretched express. This was enough to put me out of humour with Aix; and the succeeding unexpected delays at Chambéry and Modane added to the bitterness with which I regretted this innocent little interlude in a journey. I was due, in fact, at Turin at about two, and reached it at seven. There had been a breakdown or something.

These misadventures are inevitable at times, and I must say, in conclusion, that I look forward to seeing more of Aix-les-Bains—"in" the season next time, when its Casino is in full swing, and one cannot walk up a street without beholding a Prince or a Grand Duke.

A MOST UNFORTUNATE AFFAIR.

A COMPLETE STORY.

It was really a most unfortunate affair, and I frankly confess that I was in some degree to blame. But, if I erred, have I not suffered for my indiscretion? If I am not actually to be pitied, at least I do not deserve the wholesale abuse of which I am the unhappy recipient. For instance, I have been called "a cruel, hard-hearted wretch," whereas my chief fault is, that I possess too soft and susceptible a heart, as the very conduct for which I am blamed plainly shows. I have also been accused of "callously trifling with the affections of two tender girls," but what are the facts of the case? Both Miss Mayne and Miss

Westbrook—my "victims," as they have been called—are now married, and, I am told, happy; while I—I, the callous trifler, the gay deceiver—am still wearing the willow for them. For which of them? Upon my honour, I am as unable to answer that question even now, as I was in the brief and, on the whole, happy period during which I was engaged to both of them. The truth is, each of those charming girls appealed to an entirely different side of my character, and I loved them by turns, just as my gay or my gloomy side happened to be in the ascendant. In every respect they were as opposite as the Poles. Caroline was a dark-eyed, dark-haired, demure little thing, with a sweet voice and a caressing manner; Lilian was tall and fair, with a great flow of high spirits and an intense love of "fun." Thus, when I was anxious or depressed, I was soothed by the gentle society of the former, and in such moods felt that I would gladly die for Caroline Mayne; but when the pendulum had swung to the other extreme and I was bent on enjoyment, I thoroughly appreciated the latter's vivacity, and asked nothing better of Fate than permission to live for Lilian Westbrook. In short, I felt what I may call a sincere intermittent attachment for both, and could not bring myself to break with either. That the situation was an awkward one I admit, but I need hardly say that I did not place myself in it deliberately. Led astray by a too generous—and perhaps too general—admiration of beauty, I drifted into it, heedlessly but not heartlessly, as, I think, the following truthful record conclusively proves.

It is now nearly three years ago since I first met Caroline Mayne at the little riverside village of Barbelham, where I was staying to recruit my finances, which were in a sadly debilitated condition. Certainly as a lying-by place—a kind of social backwater—Barbelham had its good points. It was quiet, far from the dunning crowd, cheap, and yet within easy reach of London, from which it was distant less than twenty miles. But it was a dreadfully dull little hole, and, as I do not fish, row, or play skittles, my time hung heavily upon my hands. In three days I had sunk into a state of acute melancholia, and I really believe I was just beginning to gibber, when, at the end of the week, I opportunely met an old acquaintance. This was Mrs. Mayne, the widow of a stockbroker, who, when I was a boy at home, lived within a few doors of us and

was reputed to be wealthy. After his death, however, his affairs were found to be in sad disorder, and his widow leaving the neighbourhood we had entirely lost sight of her until I met her by chance in the High Street of Barbelham, where, it appeared, she had settled down in a pretty cottage near the river. Thanks, as I subsequently learned, to the exertions of a Mr. Jagg, her husband's executor—of whom, as the novels say, more anon—enough had been saved from the wreck to support her and her daughter in comfort, and Barbelham had been their residence for the past eight years. Evidently the air agreed with Mrs. Mayne, for she hardly looked a day older; but I had to mention my name, and ask her if she had quite forgotten Frank Leigh, before she recognised me. When she did, however, she greeted me most cordially, and immediately released the bottled-up curiosity of eight years, overwhelming me with questions about former friends and acquaintances, so that I was forcibly reminded of the legend of the Flying Dutchman, and of the boat that weird barque sometimes sent to board passing ships with letters addressed to streets long pulled down, and anxious enquiries concerning people mouldering in their graves. For all the people of whom Mrs. Mayne spoke were dead to me. Some were ruined, some had disappeared, some had actually departed this life, and the rest had passed out of mine when I left home; but I told her all I knew, and when I knew nothing I invented something, which pleased her just as well. But, though I walked home with her, her curiosity was not nearly satisfied when we reached the cottage, so she asked me in to tea—and I met Caroline. I fell a victim at the first glance. You see, I was just in the mood to appreciate her charms, for of course while I was at Barbelham my gloomy side was uppermost. In Caroline's society I found the sedative best suited to my troubled spirits, and consequently I cultivated it assiduously. Almost every day I visited the cottage and idled away hours by her side, mooning about her like a Byron with liver complaint—a wild, reckless being, with a silent sorrow somewhere, whose sole hope of happiness she held in her hand. In this strain I talked to her, read her the most mournful poems in the language, and altogether thoroughly enjoyed myself in a melancholy kind of way, until one day, about a month after our first meeting, I unburdened my soul and begged her to be the

cheerful sunbeam lighting my tangled path through the gloomy vale of life. And Caroline consented.

But Mrs. Mayne demurred. Though not positively objecting, she asked uncomfortable questions about my private means, which, I am bound to say, were far from satisfactory. I had three hundred pounds a year, my debts, and no occupation; so that, as she pointed out, I was scarcely in a position to set up a sunbeam of my own. However, I promised to work—a fact which plainly shows how much in earnest I was—and Mrs. Mayne at last consented to a conditional engagement, the chief condition being the approval of Mr. Jagg, who had assumed the management of all the widow's affairs, and acted, in a way, as Caroline's guardian. So Mr. Jagg was written to; but, as he had retired from business some time before and was travelling about on the Continent, his answer was long delayed—indeed, before it came, I had left Barbelham on business of the utmost importance.

We had been engaged about a fortnight, I think, when one evening on returning to my lodgings I found there a letter which had been forwarded from my London rooms. Tearing it open in some trepidation, for the handwriting was legal, and awakened gruesome memories of similar missives, I found that a cousin of my mother's—a wealthy old bachelor, Hughes-Norreys by name—was dead, and that I was requested to attend the funeral and the reading of the will on the Thursday of that week. As the very next day was Thursday, I had no time to lose; so I scribbled a hasty note for Caroline, in which I merely said I was called away on business; caught the first train to London; and early next morning was deposited at Copeby, the nearest station to the Hughes-Norreys property. Little did I think, as I was jolted up the Manor Avenue in a ramshackle railway fly, that in a few hours I would be the acknowledged master of the fine old family mansion and the fine old family estate. Mr. Hughes-Norreys, though a relative, had been almost a stranger to me, and I had no reason to expect more than a trifling legacy. But, as it happened, he had quarrelled with all his other relatives in turn, a fate which I alone had escaped simply because I had never even been on quarrelling terms with him. And so it came about that, when the will was read, I found that he had left me all his property on condition that I assumed the name and

arms of the Hughes-Norreys family. My decision may easily be guessed. In a few days I had resigned the name of Leigh without a sigh, and blossomed forth as Francis Hughes-Norreys, Esquire, of Copesey Manor, in Derbyshire.

But it was as Frank Leigh and not as Mr. Hughes-Norreys that I returned to Barbelham some weeks after the funeral. For the present, at least, I had decided to keep my good fortune a secret. I was always romantic, and I now desired to play the part of Lord of Burleigh in a little romance of real life. I would allow Caroline to marry me under the impression that she was taking me chiefly for worse; take her into Derbyshire for the honeymoon; show her Copesey Manor; and assure her that I was not the poor clerk she thought me, but lord of all the land for miles around. Then we would settle down, and live happily ever afterwards. Still, I was by no means unwilling to see a little more life first, especially now that I was so well-provided with the sinews of war; and so, when Caroline told me that the long-expected answer had come and that Mr. Jagg insisted on a year's probation, I cheerfully consented. I had already obtained work in a lawyer's office, I said—a statement which was very near the truth, since I had much legal business to transact in connection with my succession—and I promised to be so industrious, that when Mr. Jagg returned to England in the following spring he would be compelled to abandon all opposition to our union. So we kissed and parted, Caroline praising me for my courage, but at the same time entreating me, for her sake, not to injure my health by overwork. And, for her sake, I promised that I would not.

Of the next few months I need only say that I kept my promise, and if I injured my health, it was not through overwork. On the whole, I thoroughly enjoyed myself; but there were days when I felt unstrung and depressed, and then I flew on the wings of love to Caroline to be petted, soothed, and gently rebuked for disobedience, for of course she attributed my paleness to too close an application to my duties. So the time sped away until Christmas arrived, and I went down into Derbyshire to spend the season at the Manor.

I now come to an incident which, I must confess, at the first blush looks rather awkward. I refer, of course, to my engagement to Miss Westbrook. In excuse, I can only plead that, at the time, my bright

side was completely in the ascendant, and that Lilian was a girl well calculated to arouse the gayest emotions of my nature. Her society acted as a stimulant, in short, and it is a well-known fact that the practice of taking stimulants, once indulged in, rapidly grows upon one. Mrs. Westbrook, who was a widow with a family of three daughters, two of whom were still children, was my nearest neighbour; and, as she was very hospitable, I was often at her house, of which Lilian was the life and soul. It was impossible to meet her frequently and not come under the influence of her spells, and I am only human. Yet I protest that I was never intentionally false to dear Caroline, and to this day I can hardly tell how it happened. All I know is, that one night, during a children's party the Westbrooks were giving, I found myself in the conservatory alone with Lilian; that I lost my head, and said I don't exactly know what; and that next moment Lilian was murmuring that it was all so very sudden, but perhaps I'd better ask mamma. Thus, before I had time to realise the situation, it was all over, and I was engaged two-deep!

Well, there was no help for it. Mamma evidently knew all about it before the end of the evening; for, when I took my leave, she blessed me effusively in an undertone, and made an appointment for the next morning. By noon the following day I was Lilian's formally accepted suitor, and by the end of the week our engagement was known to the whole county, and congratulations began to pour in upon us. The wedding, however, was not to take place till the autumn, owing to the absence of a certain Uncle John, who was travelling abroad, but was expected home in June. Without Uncle John the Westbrooks apparently could do nothing. Uncle John was to fix the date; Uncle John was to superintend the drawing up of settlements; Uncle John was to give the bride away, and propose her health at breakfast afterwards; in short, all the arrangements were to be left to him, and he had to be communicated with before anything could be decided on. In due course the great man's answer came. Uncle John was graciously pleased to approve of the engagement, and ventured to suggest September as a suitable month for the ceremony.

You may be sure that I, for one, made no objection. September was eight months off, and in eight months anything might happen. At all events, I had time to turn

about in, and to devise some means of escape from the very delicate position in which I had placed myself. But neither my mother-wit nor the chapter of accidents came to my aid; and when in April I accompanied the Westbrooks up to town for the season, I was as deeply engaged as ever. And, let me assure you, the successful carrying on of two engagements at the same time involves no inconsiderable mental strain—a strain which soon began to tell upon me. As a result, my temper became extremely variable. One day I was in the height of high spirits, and delighted to dance attendance upon Lilian; the next, I was in the most diabolical depths of depression, and then my thoughts dwelt persistently on Caroline. The consequence was, that I was never in one mood long enough to devise a consistent plan of campaign; for just as I was beginning to see my way to a rupture with the one, my mind changed, and I at once turned my attention to some scheme for breaking with the other. My situation, in fact, was precisely that of Captain Macheath in "The Beggar's Opera." It has also been compared to the position of a certain animal, which I shall not permit myself to name, between two bundles of hay.

But the crisis was now close at hand. One night towards the end of April Lilian informed me that she had some news for me, and then whispered four little words which nearly turned me into stone. Uncle John had come! He had arrived unexpectedly that afternoon and was staying with Mrs. Westbrook, who expected me to dine with her next day in order to make his acquaintance. I stammered out a few words expressive of my great delight; and soon afterwards I slipped away to think things over seriously at my chambers. What was to be done? Now that Uncle John had appeared upon the scene, events were likely to progress rapidly. Dreadful visions of discovery and enraged guardians; of breaches of promise, and possibly of breaches of the peace; floated before my eyes.

"Besides," I muttered, as I paced the room, "the time of Mr. Jagg's return is drawing near, and if I wait till then I'll find myself between the devil and the deep sea with a vengeance. At present I've only Uncle John to deal with, and, if I play my cards properly, I need never have anything at all to do with Mr. Jagg. But action, prompt action, is imperative. Caroline must go!" Here I wiped away a tear.

"Yes, it must be done! but how! that's the question. Ah, I think I have it. I'll tell her I've lost my situation, and consequently my future looks blacker than ever, that I love her too well to drag her down into poverty, and that for her sake we must part. Pitch it all very sentimentally, of course, and drag in 'In the Gloaming': 'It were best to leave thee thus, dear, best for you and'—unquestionably—'best for me.' But there must be no more vacillation. I must not leave myself time to change again; I'll catch the ten o'clock train to Barbelham to-morrow, get the business over, return to town by the five o'clock express, and be able to meet Uncle John with a clear conscience."

That was a melancholy journey down to Barbelham. As I thought of all the happy hours I had spent with Caroline, of her sweet sympathy and tender ways, my gloom steadily increased; and when I alighted at Barbelham station I verily believe I was the most miserable man on the face of this earth.

I found her in the little rustic arbour near the lawn, where we had passed so many pleasant hours only the year before, and she was looking so fresh and pretty and was so glad to see me again, that I forgot the cold, calculating counsels of prudence, and greeted her with perhaps even more than my usual warmth. Then we sat down on the little seat, which was just wide enough to hold two, and almost unconsciously my arm stole round her waist and drew her gently towards me. Such is the force of habit!

"What have you been doing all this time?" asked Caroline after awhile. "You have not been down to see us for five Saturdays, and I have only had three little letters from you. But it's not your fault, I suppose; I know you're so much engaged."

"I am!" I replied with a groan. "Very much engaged indeed!"

"I thought so, when I saw you looking so pale and ill!" she exclaimed. "You've forgotten my orders, sir. You've been overdoing it."

"Yes," I sighed; "I'm afraid I've overdone it."

"It's shameful!" said Caroline warmly. "It oughtn't to be allowed! There ought to be a limit!"

"So there is," I answered drearily; "that's just the difficulty. They draw the line at one."

"At one!" repeated Caroline in some surprise. "Why, I thought you said six."

"Six!" I cried with a shudder. "Heaven forbid!"

"Well, you certainly told me your hours were nine to six, and often later, and I'm sure it's far too much."

"I see," I said; "I was thinking of something else, Carrie. But never mind the office," I went on hastily, wishing to change the subject; "tell me about yourself. Have you any news?"

"Oh, yes. I was just going to tell you. There's a surprise in store for you."

"A surprise!" I exclaimed anxiously, for the words reminded me of the "surprise" Lilian had given me overnight. "I hope it's a pleasant one."

"I—I think so," replied Caroline shyly. "Mr. Jagg has come."

"Mr. Jagg!" I groaned. "The dear man," I concluded lamely.

"Yes, Mr. Jagg," said Carrie gaily. "I knew you'd be pleased."

"My joy is too deep for words," I answered grimly. "When did he come?"

"He arrived about an hour ago, and he's going back to town after lunch. He's indoors with mamma at present, talking business."

"No, he's not," interrupted a gruff voice; "wrong in both respects, my dear. He's in the garden, and he has no business here. At least, no doubt you think so."

Caroline blushed and drew away from me. I turned pale and started to my feet. Mr. Jagg stood still and chuckled.

"This—this is Frank," murmured Caroline.

"Oh, this is Frank, is it?" he replied, glancing curiously at me.

I returned the look with interest, and my heart went down into my boots. He was a tall, powerful-looking man, some fifty years of age, perhaps, but evidently still as strong as a bull; with a most determined mouth, a thick neck, and shaggy eyebrows overhanging a pair of stern, penetrating blue eyes. Altogether he was emphatically what is called an ugly customer, and I recognised at once that he was not a man to trifle with. I shuddered to think of what might happen if he suspected me of shuffling. He was not a man to be taken in by a cock-and-bull story about a lost situation, a black future, and a heroic determination not to drag the beloved object down into poverty. No, in dealing with Mr. Jagg, honesty would certainly be the best policy. I felt that instinctively, and with the utmost promptitude entirely reversed my plans. Lilian

must be given up, not Caroline. After all, Uncle John was probably nothing more terrible than a pompous old busy-body who liked to have a finger in every family pie, but whom it would be easy enough to trick in matters not connected with business, and even at the worst he was bound to be immeasurably less dreadful than Mr. Jagg. So, having decided on my course of action, I pulled myself together and endeavoured to meet Mr. Jagg's eye with an expression of manly candour.

"So this is Frank, is it?" he repeated, still looking critically at me.

"Yes, I am Frank Leigh," I said, smiling blandly. "I'm very glad to see you, Mr. Jagg. I can assure you I've been waiting most impatiently for your return."

"Been getting impatient, eh?" he chuckled. "Were you never tempted to get married before I came back?"

"I've often had half a mind to, Mr. Jagg," I answered laughingly, glad to get a chance of speaking the truth for once.

"And judging by what I saw just now, you're still of the same mind?" he enquired.

"My feelings have never altered, sir, and never can," I returned without a blush.

"Well, well, we'll see. I must have a talk with you, Mr. Leigh, but not to-day, for I haven't time. I only just came out for a mouthful of fresh air while Mrs. Mayne was looking for a paper, and I must get indoors again. But to-morrow, eh? What time will suit you best? You're in a lawyer's office, I think?"

"I was until quite recently; but I've just come into a small fortune of five hundred a year," I said, for on this point it was absolutely necessary to deceive him.

I did not dare to tell him of Copesey Manor and my change of name, for fear of his getting wind of Mr. Hughes-Norreys's engagement to Lilian Westbrook before it was broken off.

"Five hundred a year!" he exclaimed. "Well, that promises to clear the way wonderfully. Then I'll call on you at noon to-morrow—where?"

I gave him the address of my chambers, and he noted it down in a fat pocket-book. A few minutes later he went into the house, and I did not see him again until luncheon. Shortly after that the Barbelham fly came for him and carried him off to the station.

For the rest of the afternoon I was fully occupied in satisfying Caroline's curiosity

concerning my windfall, explaining why I had not told her of it before, and listening to her plans for spending our gigantic income. I must own, however, that I did not enjoy her society as much as usual, for I was troubled in my mind and wished to be alone to think, so that I was not sorry when half-past four arrived, and I had to start to catch my train to town. Of my journey up I need only say that it was every whit as dreary as my journey down, though I wore my rue with this slight difference: I mourned for Lilian instead of Caroline. But my feelings were exactly the same, my grief was as deep, my remorse was as sincere, and my recollections of our intercourse as bitterly sweet. Dear Lilian! Not until I was about to lose you did I realise how much of my happiness was bound up in you!

But I did not waver in my determination, for the face of Mr. Jagg was ever before me. However much it cost me, I was resolved to cut myself adrift from Lilian with as little delay as possible. Luckily she was a quick-tempered girl, and we had had occasional lovers' quarrels, any one of which might, with a little care, be fomented into a serious disagreement; and from a serious disagreement to a mutual agreement to part was but a step. In the meantime, however, it behoved me to see that my manner underwent no alteration, and to act in all respects as if I expected shortly to become a member of the family. It was, therefore, in the character of Lilian's lover, eager to make her uncle's acquaintance, that I presented myself at the Westbrooks' house to keep my dinner engagement, and was shown into the drawing-room by the servant, who announced, "Mr. Hughes-Norreys," and then retired, leaving me alone with a gentleman who was seated reading a paper at the other end of the room. As I looked at him a vague feeling of uneasiness stole over me, for his figure seemed strangely familiar to me, and as I advanced and he rose to meet me, vague suspicion gave place to dreadful certainty. Great heavens! it was Mr. Jagg! What evil chance had brought him to the Westbrooks' house? and what—what would be the consequences? The mere thought of them made my blood run cold, and I turned to flee, but alas! I was too late, for he had recognised me, and, laying one huge hand on my shoulder, compelled me to stay.

"Pray do not run away before I have time to make your acquaintance, sir," he said, with grim politeness. "I think I have

the honour of speaking to Mr. Hughes-Norreys, of Copsely Manor, in Derbyshire?"

I blushed to the roots of my hair, and stammered out a reluctant "Yes."

"And yet," he continued quietly, "unless my eyes deceive me, you are also Mr. Frank Leigh, late of Barbelham?"

It was useless to deny it. I hung my head and looked, I doubt not, the picture of convicted guilt.

"You have been engaged to my ward since last May, have you not, Mr. Leigh?" was his next enquiry.

I muttered something about a boyish infatuation, but he cut me short before I could complete a sentence.

"And I think you have been engaged to my niece, Miss Westbrook, since last January, Mr. Hughes-Norreys?"

His niece! Oh, what an unhappy fate was mine! He—Mr. Jagg—was Uncle John!

"Your niece, sir?" I cried. "Are you Mr. John Westbrook, then?"

"No, sir. One name's quite enough for a simple man like me. Plain John Jagg's good enough for me."

"But you said you were Miss Westbrook's uncle," I persisted.

"And so I am, sir. Her uncle and her mother's brother."

Mrs. Westbrook's brother! Somehow I had never thought of that. I had never heard him called anything but "Uncle John," and had taken it for granted—why, I know not—that he was Mrs. Westbrook's brother-in-law. I had never asked any questions about him, because when I was with Lilian we had always had something more interesting than Uncle John to talk about, but I now bitterly regretted my fatal lack of curiosity.

"And now, Mr. Hughes-Leigh," said Mr. Jagg, with savage humour, "I beg pardon, Mr. Leigh-Norreys—really, it is very confusing—I mean Hughes-Norreys, I'd like a few words with you. How fortunate it is that the two ladies to whom you are engaged happen to have the same guardian! It saves so much trouble. In one interview we can settle about both. You see, if I arrange my business with Mr. Hughes-Norreys to-night, I need not trouble to keep my appointment with Mr. Leigh to-morrow; and, between ourselves, Mr. Hughes-Norreys, the less I see of Mr. Leigh the better I'll be pleased."

I smiled a sickly smile and intimated that I was ready to listen to him.

"Very good, sir," he answered, leading the way to the door, "but not here, sir. We'll

go to the study, where we're not so likely to be disturbed. So come along, please."

Without a word I followed him out of the room, along the hall, and into the study. Arrived there, he seated himself in an elbow-chair in front of a writing-desk, while I collapsed into a seat opposite, and strove to assume an air of grave composure.

"Now, sir," he began sharply, "which of the ladies do you really hope to marry?"

I hesitated for a moment, but only for a moment. With a quickness of perception almost amounting to genius, I instantly divined the proper course to pursue, and for the second time that day completely altered my tactics in the very face of the enemy. Mr. Jagg was Carrie's guardian, but he was Lilian's uncle, and was likely to have her interests even more at heart. It was obviously the better plan to abandon Caroline, promising to make such pecuniary atonement as her guardian thought fit, and to lay myself, Copesey Manor, and my seven thousand a year at Lilian's feet. Before he had time to repeat his question, I was ready with my answer.

"It is a painful question," I said sadly, "but I must be candid. I own that when I was young and thoughtless, I drifted into an engagement with Miss Mayne, but since I saw your niece she has reigned alone in my heart."

"And yet, only this morning," answered Mr. Jagg, "I heard Mr. Leigh state that his feelings for some one else had never altered, and never could. How do you account for that, Mr. Hughes-Norreys?"

"That—that was a flower of rhetoric," I muttered, turning very red.

"In plain English, a lie?" he suggested.

I received this remark with the silence of contempt.

"It's my private opinion, Mr. Hughes-Norreys, that Mr. Leigh's a scoundrel, for, from what you say, I suppose I'm to understand that he declines to fulfil his engagement with my ward?"

I bowed to intimate that he evidently understood me perfectly.

"There is abundant proof of the engagement, you know," he resumed. "If this case came into court, the result would be very heavy damages, sir, to say nothing of the scandal and loss of reputation. If I were you, I'd advise Leigh to settle it out of court, Mr. Hughes-Norreys."

"Sly old fox!" I thought. "He doesn't want a scandal any more than I do. I knew he wouldn't allow Copesey Manor and seven thousand a year to go out of the

family. Mr. Jagg," I continued aloud, "my first engagement was an indiscretion, I own, and all indiscretions must be paid for sooner or later. I assure you I am ready to do everything that is honourable."

"I'd like something more definite than that," he returned drily. "Our ideas of what is honourable seem to differ considerably."

"I leave it entirely to you, then!" I said, scorning to notice his petty sneer.

To my astonishment and disgust, he named—but no! my modesty forbids me to mention the value which he set upon me. Suffice it to say that I have had a much higher opinion of myself ever since.

"Monstrous!" I cried, starting up. "It is really more than I am worth."

"I am well aware of that," he retorted sharply. "But we are not considering your value at present, but the value of the man Miss Mayne thought you were. The sum I've named is the lowest I'll accept on her behalf."

"Really, Mr. Jagg, I must say you've a wonderful eye for the Mayne chance," I said, hoping to propitiate him, but he received my harmless little pleasantry with such a blood-curdling scowl that I nearly fell off my chair.

"We'll have no tomfoolery, if you please," he rapped out. "That's my ultimatum, and you can accept it or reject it as you like. If we have to bring an action the damages will probably come to even more, and in addition you'll have the costs to pay."

As there was a certain amount of truth in what he said, I decided to capitulate, and, after one more effort to beat him down, drew a cheque for the amount. Then Mr. Jagg, who, it appeared, had been a lawyer, drew up certain documents, and a footman who came with a message concerning dinner, and another servant, having been pressed into the service as witnesses to our signatures, our business was soon concluded.

"Well, that's over!" I said, flinging myself back in my chair with a sigh of relief when we found ourselves alone again. "I think we've arranged everything satisfactorily, Mr. Jagg."

"Not so fast, sir!" he exclaimed. "You have satisfied me as a guardian, but you have yet to satisfy me as an uncle."

"There won't be much trouble about that, I imagine," I said confidently.

"You think not?" he enquired with a peculiar smile.

"Of course not! I am free now, and your niece need never know anything about

my little escapade. There were no witnesses to our conversation, ha! ha! ha!"

"No," he said slowly, opening a drawer; "there are no witnesses, ho! ho! ho!"

"We're close-tiled," I added with a wink; "entirely by ourselves."

"Just so," he assented, taking something out of the drawer, "all by ourselves, aren't we?"

"As the poet says, 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.' And it really would be foolish to let Miss Westbrook know anything, for now that Miss Mayne's matter is settled, there is absolutely no one to come between us."

"Exactly; there's nobody to come between us," he repeated, placing himself between me and the door; and then I noticed that he grasped a vicious-looking horsewhip. I began to feel some uneasiness.

"I trust, Mr. Jagg," I murmured, "that you—you have no objection to my marriage with your niece?"

"Objection!" he roared. "How do I know you haven't a wife already, or a dozen for that matter? And in any case do you think I'd allow a perfidious, sneaking little rascal like you to marry my niece, or even to come within a mile of her now that I've found you out? You know yourself, that when she hears of your conduct—and she'll hear of it before you're an hour older—she'll refuse to touch you with a pair of tongs. But I'm not so scrupulous, and I'll touch you to some purpose. I'll teach you to go about engaging yourself promiscuously, my fine fellow. I'll write my opinion of you pretty legibly before I've done with you!" And he made a frantic rush at me.

It pains me, pains me excessively, to have to refer to the disgusting scene that followed, and, for Mr. Jagg's sake, I touch on it as lightly as possible. It was shocking to see a man of his age dishonouring his grey hairs and behaving more like a wild beast than a human being. Such a sickening display of the vilest passions that degrade human nature I have never witnessed before or since. It was not I whom he humiliated, but himself. Nay! he even gave me an opportunity of showing how immeasurably superior to him I was in true dignity, for I can say with honest pride that I never struck him a single blow in return. But it was a terrible exhibition of unbridled violence, and it pained me acutely. After the whip was broken, too, I grieve to say that he degraded himself still further by applying his boot to me like any coal-heaver,

continuing the brutal sport until the servants rushed in thinking that murder was being done. Then, for the first time, he paused, ordered them to throw open the front door, and "personally conducted" me off the premises. As he propelled me through the hall, I caught a glimpse of Lilian's frightened face gazing down on us from the floor above, and I waved my hand in what I meant for a sublimely mournful gesture of farewell, but as it is impossible to look heroic on the top of another man's boot, I fear it did not impress her as I desired. The next moment I was soaring through the hall-door, and that was the last I ever saw of Lilian Westbrook.

Nor have I seen Caroline since the catastrophe. As soon as I was able to move, I went abroad on a protracted tour, from which I have only just returned—to find, alas! that the idols of my heart were as fickle as they were fair. Within a few months of their engagement to me, they had actually so completely forgotten me—not to say themselves—as to marry, the one a baronet, the other a rising barrister. Would that I could forget them as easily, but, go where I will, I am haunted by visions of the past, ghosts that will not be laid. Neither in excitement nor in solitude, the two great remedies of those who have a grief to grapple with, can I find oblivion. If I seek distraction amidst the gaiety and glitter of society, I am constantly reminded of my lost Lilian; and if, in the vain hope of finding peace, I retire from the world to lead a quiet, studious life among my books, I miss the sweet companionship of Caroline at every turn. Mine is no ordinary case of broken heart, it is a compound fracture—and compound fractures take long to heal. Sometimes I even fear that the wound is mortal—I'm sure mortification set in long ago—and that I am doomed to fall a martyr to my constancy. In any case, I know that never again will I be the man I was before the occurrence of this most unfortunate affair.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

BY MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*The Thirteenth Brydaine*," "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benefit of Clergy*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI.

"WHEN will you please to want your dinner, sir?"

Mrs. French's ample form filled the whole of the entrance passage of Dr.

Meredith's house, as he opened his own front door some ten minutes after he had banged Mrs. Johnson's behind him.

"Dinner!" Dr. Meredith's voice gave Mrs. French what she described later, to her underling Jane, as "quite a turn." "Never!"

With this summary of his wishes he entered the sitting-room and shut the door sharply on her. She retreated to the kitchen, to prepare the meal, amid gloomy presages as to Dr. Meredith's future, for the usual time.

Dr. Meredith himself, meanwhile, flung his hat on the table and flung himself into an arm-chair with very much the same gesture.

Never in all his thirty-one years had life presented itself to him as such a mass of impossible complications as it did at the present moment. And perhaps they were the more insoluble because his life had run hitherto on such very simple lines.

He had spent his student years without anything special to mark either him or them; unless it were that he gave more work to his profession than most of his friends, both from a real love and enthusiasm for it, and a simple-hearted determination to get on so well as to rid his father—a country clergyman, and far from rich—of the burden of his maintenance as soon as might be. He had succeeded in his aim, and had scarcely become qualified before he got an appointment as house surgeon at the hospital where he had studied. A year or two later this was followed by the offer, obtained for him through personal interest, of an excellent assistantship to a doctor whose London practice was very large and somewhat renowned. This he held for the next few years, and then the practice, through the sudden death of the doctor in question, passed into other hands, and Meredith found himself temporarily "at a loose end." He had saved money during those years, however, and determined to buy a practice for himself. A London practice was beyond his means, so he looked about for a country one; telling himself contentedly that, after all, the country presented a broader field, and more opportunity for working up a good connection.

The country practice was discovered in that at Mary Combe, which presented the two advantages of a low price and great possibilities in the form of a country connection that only needed working up. Here, therefore, some nine months before this April,

Dr. Meredith had taken up his abode and set to work to make the most of the said possibilities. He had more than one motive for the energy with which he attacked the position.

During the years of his assistantship, Dr. Meredith, being naturally of an extremely sociable disposition, had used, as much and as often as his professional claims allowed, the *entrée* which one or two introductions had procured for him in the first place into a certain "set" consisting of a rather anomalous mixture of fashionable and intellectual people. He became, quickly enough, in the houses composing that "set," a decidedly popular person. A young, good-looking man with an excellent manner, who is spoken of as "likely to do well," finds many smiles waiting for him. Among these houses was that of Lady Carruthers. And here, one evening some two years before his leaving town for Mary Combe, he met Althea Godfrey for the first time. Like all her friends, Dr. Meredith had heard of Lady Carruthers's niece, "the lady doctor;" and like most of his own professional friends, Dr. Meredith held women doctors in abhorrence. He had listened to Miss Godfrey's name with a careless desire to be preserved from her acquaintance. But on this special evening he chanced to be introduced to a girl whose name he failed to catch; a girl whose personality consisted for him in wonderful grey eyes, and the most charming manner he had ever known. It was not until Dr. Meredith had fallen in love with all the fervour of a man who has never cared much for women before, that he found out who and what Althea Godfrey was.

But he was far too much in love to pay the smallest attention then to any such detail as Althea's profession. And he spent many terrible weeks of alternating hope and fear before that week came which brought his proposal and her acceptance. The months that followed had slipped by for him like a dream, in which the parting made necessary by his settling at Mary Combe was the first break.

He did not intend to claim Althea for his own until he could give her an income that should keep her far above cares and worries, and this incentive it was that formed so powerful a lever in the force with which he threw himself into the work before him.

The practice proved itself only too adaptable a tool for this same energy. It had been much neglected by its former possessor, and, as has been said, it afforded every chance

of developement. And develope it Dr. Meredith did ; greatly aided therein by the personal popularity he very quickly gained. Its limits extended so rapidly, that only three months had gone by when he first found himself in the midst of the overwork which had gone on increasing ever since, and which, through his expression of his feelings concerning it, to Althea, had been the cause of his present hopeless confusion.

His first proceeding, after having flung himself into the chair, was to use very strong language concerning his own conduct in writing the aforesaid complaint.

"And yet," he said, with a groan, "who could—who on earth could have dreamed that it would lead to this !"

He gave a long and heavy sigh, and kicked the footstool on the hearth-rug as far from him as his best force could send it. This seemed to afford him some slight ease ; his face relaxed a little from the tension which held every feature in a hold of bewilderment, anger, and perplexity.

He was absolutely bewildered, in the first place, by the revelation which Althea's action had brought to him. Dr. Meredith had rather prided himself on his knowledge of women ; not that he was by any means one of the cynical dissectors of feminine humanity, who so complacently flatter themselves that they have placed the whole sex under their pocket microscopes. His knowledge was founded on very simple lines. He thought he knew human nature very fairly, and he had thought that women were but a part of the whole. He expected a certain set of characteristics from a woman—characteristics in which she might very likely fail, he thought, but to which he never dreamed of any addition. He himself, though perfectly strong, clever, and absolutely clear-headed and reliable, was not specially original.

The fact that a woman, and a woman whom he thought he knew intimately, could originate and carry out a scheme so unprecedented and so unconventional as that before him was a realisation that had overwhelmed him with amazement.

Following on his bewilderment came his anger. Dr. Meredith was proud, and he possessed the quality which is never so adequately described as by the word "masterfulness." To be defied was the one thing he could not brook ; very few people in all his life had ever been bold enough to try the experiment of offering him defiance of any sort. And now, the woman whose every thought and feeling

were, he had flattered himself, in perfect submission to his, had not only offered it, but was prepared to maintain it, and maintain it stoutly ! The conviction that her will was every whit as strong as, if not stronger than his own ; that, if not actually defeated, he had met a formidable equal ; together with the hastily smothered but smarting sense of humiliation at not having carried his point, filled him with a heat of angry resentment such as he had never felt in all his life before.

But perhaps the most present source of agitation at this moment, and the heaviest pressure, was his perplexity. His feelings about the situation would keep ; the question which must be decided now, this very hour, was—how was he to act in it ? What was he to do ? He would have given worlds, as he sat this Sunday morning in his sitting room, for a competent adviser ; some one who could suggest to him some course of action. He felt absolutely incapable of originating one for himself.

Althea's presence in Mary Combe as his assistant was, he said to himself, impossible. He simply could not have her there. He could not have her going about in her man's dress doing his work with him, and generally settling down into her false position, as he angrily called it. As he thought it over indignantly, details came crowding into his mind ; details such as the necessary introduction of Althea to his few friends in the neighbourhood ; the terms of masculine equality that must necessarily be established between her and them ; and the comments on her in her assumed character to which he should have to listen and acquiesce in.

The work itself Dr. Meredith did not mind for her. He had, after many an argument with Althea early in their engagement, become to a great extent converted from his first opinion of women doctors. In his case, as in some others, his feeling had taken its rise more in instinctive repugnance to the persons than comprehension of their position ; and the repugnance being so forcibly overthrown for him in Althea's person, the sequence was not difficult. He had, in the course of time and of long discussion with her, both on the abstract subject and details of it, become so used now to the thought of her work, that it had even grown to be a natural and withal a delightful thing that he and she should have all their deepest interests on a common ground. So that, under other circumstances—if they had, for instance,

been married, and she had proposed to share his work—he could have very readily consented. It was the position in which she had placed herself that he fought against, and recoiled from with all his force.

However, the more he sat and stared at the floor, the less he seemed able to think of any way by which to remove her from it. The only fact that he did grasp was that he never in his life had been so utterly at a loss. This reflection was useful, perhaps, as a beginning, but it could not be said to lead to anything. Neither could the heavy groan with which he rose and tried a change of position by walking to the window.

Althea was there, in Mary Combe; he must get her away at once; he could not by any known means get her away if she would not go. This was the circle of propositions round which his miserably bewildered brain revolved. He thought of a desperate appeal to her; he thought of a stern command; he thought of a compromise in the shape of a third expostulation; and he dismissed each thought in turn with the sensation of hopelessness which is the mental counterpart of the sensation of walking straight into a dead wall.

He knew in the bottom of his heart that he could do nothing; that Althea had been, and was still, too strong for him. He emphasized the anger with which this conviction filled him by the murder of an annoying bluebottle; but

this brought him neither relief nor solution of the riddle.

He was rather hungry; in his haste to go and see Althea he had made a very "sketchy" breakfast, and partly from hunger, partly from absolute worry, his brain began mechanically to reiterate the questions that perplexed him, till they seemed like the buzzing of the dead bluebottle. He strode back to the arm-chair in restless desperation, but he had scarcely sat down when a thump as of a sharp object on the door panel, announced the arrival of Mrs. French with the luncheon-tray.

Having no hand to spare, she was wont to practise this compromise as to knocking, and then to perform a sort of hasty conjuring trick on the latch with her right hand.

"If you please, sir!" she said breathlessly, in a voice which also contained a tentative remembrance of their last meeting, at the same time clattering down the tray with a bang which mixed most of its contents together; "there's Bill Sims in the surgery, waitin' for you. Some stuff for his sister he wants; you told him to come after church, he says."

Dr. Meredith rose, and without a word strode down the room to the door communicating with the surgery, dashed it open with his foot and let it bang together behind him.

"Hang it all!" he muttered wrathfully; "one can't even be allowed to think out a thing in peace!"

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vallacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestel of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII. PROOF POSITIVE.

PENELOPE stepped into the dark wood feeling dazed and helpless. Even now she could not believe that this fortune had any foundation in fact. It was impossible that for so many years her father should have lived a life of sordid poverty and of parsimoniousness, when he knew that a word from him would bring hidden treasure to light. She looked back on the struggles of her uncle and of her mother, both of them determined not to sink down into the mean, sordid conditions of the existence lived by the King and his son, and the remembrance of those past struggles made tears start to her eyes.

"He could not have been so cruel as that," she said to herself; but the thought that her father had stooped to many a meanness, and many a miser's ruse, prevented her from dismissing the idea as impossible. When she looked back at her own youth, her young ambition, her ignorance of life and of the power of love, her anger rose to its height. Had her father kept his secret till it was too late?

"No," she said again, "it is impossible. His mad fancy pleases itself in the thought that he has found hidden treasure, and he wishes to punish me for marrying beneath me. What would that matter, what would anything matter if—if I loved him?"

She was walking fast, heedless of the ruts, heedless, too, of the occasional logs and fallen trees lying in the path. But all at once she found herself at the

stile, and she paused. The mist was slowly dispersing, and the moon was scattering the fleecy clouds. A night-jar made itself heard, and a frightened hare crossed her path. She was looking towards the Palace, but she had to go down a green slope, and to cross the river, before she could reach the glen. The night was still, and the cool air had a calming influence on her nerves. As she looked across the valley, following with her eyes the path she must take, she was suddenly dismayed by seeing a figure walking quickly down the opposite slope, and making straight for the wood. The light was not strong enough to show more than that it was a human being moving swiftly, and coming on evidently with some set purpose.

Penelope was not in the least nervous. She had been brought up so close to nature that the fear of loneliness and darkness, which most women possess by nature, had never troubled her. Part of her nameless attraction lay in this want of feminine weakness. It was not an assumption of manly strength, but merely the absence of the weakness of the other sex. For this reason she was surprised at suddenly feeling a strange fear of the on-coming figure. Her heart beat fast, and she felt rooted to the spot, whilst her eyes remained fixed on the advancing form. Gradually she discerned that it was a woman, then as the figure grew nearer and nearer, walking unusually fast up the hill, Penelope uttered a little cry of surprise. It was Dora Bethune.

Dora! What could bring her here at this time of night! She must have been to bed, and have risen from it to come here! What folly! Was every one going mad? Still, Penelope felt possessed by the strange and nameless fear. She half-thought another

that she would hide in the wood and let the girl pass her, but this, too, seemed senseless, and so, moving out of the shadow, she stood by the stile waiting for the girl's head to appear above the brow of the steep slope.

In a few moments Dora reached the top, and made straight towards Penelope. During the two minutes' walk which separated them, Penelope's heart beat even quicker than before, for Dora seemed to be entirely unconscious that another human being was near to her, and yet she must be able to see her. The next instant Penzie understood the true facts of the case. The young girl was walking in her sleep! The Princess did not realise this a moment too soon, but, having done so, she did not know how to act. She had read of such things, but she had never before come in contact with a case of sleep-walking. She must not wake her, that was all she knew. One moment more and she stepped quickly to one side, leaving Dora to reach the stile without interruption.

What was she doing? What ought Penelope to do? Then the truth flashed upon her. Dora had been so much frightened and impressed by the scene through which she had gone, that she was re-enacting it now. Another second, and Penzie's heart bounded for joy. She would follow her, and, if it were true, she would know.

In an instant she, too, had climbed over the stile, and was following Dora as noiselessly as she could. She noticed that the girl had put on her hat, but that she had not dressed herself fully. Her hair hung down her shoulders, and she had merely slipped on a dress and jacket over her nightdress. Penelope thought that she ought to turn her aside and lead her home. The girl might catch cold or harm herself; but the great wish to know the truth, and the curious chance which had made it possible for her to find it out, prevented her from listening to the voice of prudence. Besides, she argued, an attempt to take Dora home might result only in awaking her, and would certainly frighten her. It was better to let her alone, and merely to follow her.

It was strange how surely and how unhesitatingly the girl walked on. She seemed to be able to see perfectly, though her eyes were shut, and she carefully avoided the many trunks and occasional holes with the precision difficult to understand and to

Penzie.

Circumstances or twice Penzie thought that she was dreaming, and that she was follow-

The h

ing a ghostly phantom which was luring her on to some scene of danger. Her limbs trembled as she followed the figure, sure only of one thing, that, whatever happened, she must not lose sight of her. Another strange fact was that Dora when awake could not walk as fast as Penelope, but now the Princess found it difficult to follow her.

In this strange manner they both walked through the wood, till they reached the identical spot where Dora had been gathering ferns. Here the girl paused, then stooped down and seemed to be gathering up the poor roots, whose leaves were already beginning to wither. Seeing this, or appearing to do so, the girl threw them down again, and leaving the path, plunged into the wood.

Still Penelope followed, hardly able to still her beating heart, and full of certainty that now she was going to discover the secret.

Once, from the difficulty of following her through the thick brushwood, she lost sight of Dora, but pressing forward she again caught sight of her cloak, and at the same time she noticed how heedless she was of the branches and brambles which impeded her and sadly tore her loose hair.

"I ought not to let her go on," thought Penzie, but the wish to know, to make sure, was too strong within her, and still she followed. Again Dora turned suddenly, and, in doing so, found herself face to face with Penelope. The latter shrank back. The expression of the girl's face was so strange, so unnatural, her eyes were wide open, and she was talking to herself.

"It's here, it's here. You must go into this ditch. I can't swear, you know, but a Bethune never breaks a promise, never. Let me help you. I can't believe it."

"Dora," said Penelope softly, "where is it?"

Dora did not appear to heed the question, but plunged knee-deep into the ditch, and Penzie kept close beside her. Then she stooped and parted the ferns and the brambles, and at last the Princess saw the old stone wall.

"It's here, here; the stone must be turned round—I want to tell her, but indeed I must not. I promised." She tried to move the stone with her fingers till her very nails bled, then, as if guided by some invisible power, she plunged her hand into the ditch and brought out a chisel, evidently that which had been dropped there by the King.

"That's it; now—now I can do it," she muttered, and with quite an unnatural degree of skill she loosed the stone and disclosed the long-hidden box.

Penelope could no longer doubt that if there were any truth in the discovery, this was the place. But what could she do? She would have liked to draw Dora away, she even gently pulled her cloak, but the girl seemed endowed with a supernatural strength of purpose which nothing could frustrate.

"The gold is in these bags, and here are notes and papers. He says so. Is it true? The Princess doubts me. I never told a lie in my life. Forster, tell me, is it true? You always speak the truth."

Penzie shivered from a fear she had never before experienced. She saw the girl plunge her fingers into a canvas bag and finger the coin it contained. She even took some out, and the clink sounded hateful to the Princess. The accursed gold was here, really here, but—

"Dora," she said softly, overcome with fear and a strange misgiving, "put all this away and come with me."

Dora lifted her head as if she had heard a very, very distant sound, and as if she were suddenly startled. She began hastily putting back the gold piece by piece. By accident she dropped one of them into the ditch; then she fell on her knees and searched hurriedly for the missing coin. Penelope thought the search was hopeless, and that she must wake her or get her away by force, but in another moment Dora rose up with the lost coin in her hand, and very hastily she began to put everything back.

So far all was well.

Penzie heaved a sigh of relief to think that, at all events, she knew, and that she could by-and-by come here again by herself. But at this moment she saw that Dora was struggling to replace the stone, and that the task was almost beyond her strength. It had become wedged, and though the poor girl tore her hands over it, and even allowed Penelope to help her, it was all in vain, the secret door would not swing back.

What was to be done?

"Come away," said Penzie quickly. "It is getting late; you must come home." She took her hand firmly and tried to draw her away, but she was dealing with an unknown force.

"I must, I must hide it! Penelope must not know. I promised."

"Dora, Dora, come away."

It was in vain, for still the girl struggled with her hopeless task. Dawn was now overpowering the moonlight. Some early shepherd might pass that way, and Penzie, despairing, felt that soon she must wake the girl.

"Dora," she called, "Dora!" speaking louder.

Suddenly the stone seemed to move of itself, and slipped back into its right position just as Penzie had shaken her companion violently by the arm, and had managed to awake her from her strange sleep.

As Dora slowly regained consciousness she uttered a sharp cry of fear and horror combined, and fell forward against Penelope.

"Where am I? What is it? Oh, Penzie, Penzie, what has happened?"

"You came here in your sleep, dear, don't be afraid. I am here with you. It is this stupid secret that haunted you."

Dora gazed round her, horror-struck at seeing where she was.

"Oh, Princess, you know! I have shown you! In my sleep, in my sleep! I did not know it! Why did you follow me?" and she burst into tears.

"Nonsense, dear, you could not help it. Come back now. Take my arm."

Dora silently did as she was told, and for some time the two painfully pushed their way through the tangled undergrowth. At last they came to the old path where lay the heap of withering ferns.

Here Dora paused and looked round again.

"Princess, Princess, why did you follow me? Oh, it was cruel of you! A Bethune never breaks a promise. What will Forster say? I—I—did it without—without——"

Then without any warning the girl fell down unconscious upon the ground. The fright and the strain of the strange episode had been too much for her.

Penelope, horrified, knelt down and tried to revive her. But there was no water at hand, and it was hopeless to think of carrying her.

"What shall I do?" she thought; then, after a few moments, she saw plainly that she must go and get help.

The girl was still, cold, and stiff, so this was no mere fainting fit. But what would Forster say? Was she, Penelope, doomed to hurt all those she loved?

However there was no help for it, she must run to the farm and get Jim Oldcorn to come and carry Dora home. In another

moment she was hastening towards the place she had left only two hours before.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. AN UNEXPECTED RETURN.

"WHEN ah went t'scheul," remarked Jim Oldcorn when, in the clear grey dawn, he had almost carried Dora up to her room, "ah mind oar oald misses was taken wi' the fits loike this."

"Hush, Jim," said the Princess impatiently. "She is better now. Send Betty here and say nothing about it. Was my father asleep when I called you?"

"He skratit his head, but he cudn't mak nothing of my pretendit business, so he turned round and fell to sleeping. It's sum'at like t' man to tak his own way."

"Well, that will do, Jim," said the Princess, impatiently waving him away as she began to apply restoratives; but it was some time before she and Betty could make Dora recollect where she was and what she had been doing.

When at last she recovered from her lethargy, they were glad enough to see her turn her face to the wall and fall asleep.

"I can't make head nor tail of this story," said Betty, as she put the room tidy and took away Dora's dress, all bedraggled and muddy.

"She walked in her sleep, and I am afraid I woke her," said Penelope. "Don't talk about it, Betty, to the other servants."

"As if I should, indeed! It's not much conversation these empty-headed girls get out of me, Miss Penelope—Mrs. Winskell, I mean. But you should be getting some rest too, ma'am, you're as white as a ghost. I'll stop here with the young lady. It's a bad night's work. There never will be any luck on the house as long as all these strangers keep plaguing us."

Penelope, leaving Betty in charge, walked away. She allowed her to make remarks which she would not have stood from anybody else, for Betty belonged to the old days of poverty before this miserable gold had come to ruin her life.

Having once more regained her own room, the bride, who yet was no bride, sat down utterly weary and spent. It was true that she had brought Dora home safely, but how could she truthfully account to Forster for all this night's work? As for herself, she had seen the gold, she knew now where to find it, but what could she do? It belonged to her father, and he was not likely to part with it. The root of all

evil it certainly was. It was indeed cursed, doubly cursed.

What should she do next? Her uncle must be told, he had more power with her father than she had. Perhaps he could make the poor crazy brain understand the necessity there was of examining this secret hoard, and of at once placing it in some safe place. How much was there, and what was its value? Had she known of this sooner she might have married Forster, and she might have been happy now! All her self-sacrifice was wasted, utterly wasted. In this lay the bitterness of the knowledge, and it was like the bitterness of death.

She was too restless to go to bed, so she changed her dress and did away with the signs of all she had gone through. Sometimes Forster came down early. Perhaps she could meet him and explain something to him about Dora's misadventure. Perhaps Dora would not be able to leave the Palace, and that would mean another few days of happiness for her—but afterwards, afterwards! What was to happen!

When the September sun rose bright and clear over the dales and glens, Penelope, pale but calm, sauntered out into the garden and began picking some late roses for the drawing-room. It was a perfect day, all the mist was clearing away. Summer was not yet gone, but still seemed to be a favoured guest, to be made the most of and smiled upon. All nature spoke of love and of happiness, and Penelope knew that she, too, was living under its spell. Some day the winter would come, and she must forget the glory of this summer of life; but not yet, her heart cried out.

All at once she was conscious of footsteps. She knew they were Forster's footsteps, and that he was near her. An angle of the Palace was hiding her, but he would come round, they would meet. She stood up with her hands full of roses, and when Forster came upon her the colour from them appeared to reflect itself upon her face. She herself was a dream of beauty, and he stood still almost speechless at the sight of her. He had meant to avoid her till necessity made him decide what was best for her—for both of them.

"Penelope," he said, conscious of using her Christian name without permission. Then he paused.

"I wanted to see you," she exclaimed. "Dora is not well. She had rather a shock last night. My father alarmed her, and her mind dwelt upon the fright, I suppose, for quite late I saw her walking in her

sleep, where we left her last night in the wood."

"Dora did that! How strange! But you were there, too!" Forster was somewhat puzzled by these nocturnal walks.

"Yes, I had gone to see my father. He often sleeps at the farm. Perhaps it is safer not to mention it to Dora. Still, I do not think she can travel to-day."

"But, indeed, we must go—I must go," he said, knowing that he was living as it were over a volcano. "My mother expects us, and now that you and the air of the Rothery Glen have made me so much better, I must not delay any longer. I must decide——"

"Yes, we must decide," said Penelope slowly, then she added: "but, indeed, Dora must be allowed rest. Unfortunately I woke her, and the shock was great."

"Shall I go and see her! Poor little girl!"

"No, she is asleep now. Betty has been sitting with her. Still, I am sure she will need rest. You must not go to-day."

They were both silent for a few minutes, but Forster slowly took a rose from her hands as if he were unconscious of the action.

"In some cases," he said after a time, beginning to walk down the drive by her side, "in some cases there is nothing but flight left for a man, even if he is brave."

Penelope raised her head slightly higher, as if the word flight was one she could not understand.

"My ancestors did not know the meaning of flight," she said coldly. "If you think that——" how could she explain this new discovery and the freedom she hoped to get from it?

"That what?"

"That one may never brave the displeasure of others, you hardly understand our Dale character."

They walked slowly on and on. The drive had turned and they were not visible from the house. Forster's resolutions, because they had been very feeble, began to melt away like morning dew; but outwardly he was calm, and exhibited no tell-tale emotion.

"You do not understand that since yesterday I have had to look at things from a new point of view. There is no longer any other way of avoiding the precipice."

They had now reached the gate of the drive which opened out upon the road. Across some green meadow lands one could

see the beautiful lake shimmering beneath the rising mist. Some sparrows, which had been giving themselves a dust bath upon the high-road, flew quickly away. Overhead several swallows circled above the water, or darted with lightning speed after the buzzing flies. As they both gazed silently and almost aimlessly down the road, conscious of the presence of each other and of nothing else, Forster saw the dust fly upwards, and the sound of wheels was distinctly audible. Penelope, who hated the ordinary tourist, drew back a few steps and sheltered herself behind an evergreen oak which bordered the drive; but Forster did not move. A few seconds passed, then Penelope heard him exclaim in a tone of surprise:

"What is the matter! Won't you come home! It is breakfast-time." But instead of answering, Penelope remained silent and rooted to the spot, and it was another voice that called out, and another step that moved towards them.

"Forster! You here! Thank Heaven!" It was Philip's voice.

From her hidden position Penelope saw everything, but she seemed spellbound, and could not come forward.

"Go round to the back," said Philip to the driver, using the tone of a master in his own home. This made her wince, and in another minute she saw the two meeting at the gate only a few steps from her.

"Philip!" said Forster, and paused.

"Yes, you are surprised. You don't know how glad I am to see you here. I have not stopped a moment on the way, I would not even telegraph. Where is Penelope? There is nothing the matter with her, I hope."

"No—no, she is here."

The spell was broken, and Penelope moved towards him, saying:

"Why did you not write? Is anything the matter?"

For a moment Philip looked at her, his glance seeming to search every line of her face, as if to find out the answer to the all important question; but he saw nothing new, only the old look of coldness. He heaved a little sigh.

"I am sorry, dear, that I startled you, but you see I came as quickly as a letter could arrive. I found that, after all, I could not keep away, because of——"

"Of what?" said Forster. He seemed scarcely to know what he was saying.

"You will think me ridiculous, but it was because of you. Three nights you

appeared to me and beckoned me to follow you. Of course it was a pure hallucination, a touch of fever, I suppose, but the impression was so strong there was no withstanding it. I thought you must be very ill, so I came."

"But I am much better, nearly well. Dora and I came here to—I mean I thought the Dale air would cure me, and it has. I'll go now and warn the Duke of your arrival."

Taking a side-walk, Forster disappeared, leaving the two together. He wished, most heartily, that he had not stayed so long, and he hoped Dora would be able to travel to-day. He felt that he was in a strange whirlpool, and he could hardly believe that he, Forster Bethune, had fallen so low. What was he to do? How was he to act? Circumstances seemed to spread themselves round him like a fine net, out of which he could not struggle. The sin had been originally planned by Penelope's uncle, and all the rest had followed, according to the inexorable laws of cause and effect.

As he hurried forward, as if in a dream, and with thick darkness surrounding him, Philip, his friend, was slowly walking with his wife.

"My darling," he said, drawing her arm into his, "my darling, are you at all glad to see me? I have hungered for this moment, but I fought against it because you told me to go." He raised her hand to his lips. It was cold and passive. "Then Forster fell ill, he was very ill, and I had to give up a good deal of time to him. I could not think, I had just to do the next thing that had to be done. There were the men, too, to see after. They will do anything if they believe in you, and it was difficult when Forster was laid by to cheer them up. He has the gift of making everybody obey him willingly and joyfully, but with me it is otherwise; I could only appeal to his influence, but that helped us all. He was so unhappy about us, Penelope; I could not explain, and his noble nature could not understand our relationship to each other. Do you know that it fretted him all through his illness? He blamed himself for having taken me away. He is most good and noble! It was like him to come here to see you, darling."

"He came here to rest. He is going away to-day—or rather he was going, but Dora is not quite well."

"How fortunate I found him still here! But then, Penzie, there was time to think, and I reviewed all our life, and all the

mistakes I had made, but still I felt very hopeful—yes, hopeful. I believed that in time I should win you, my dearest; that all the past would be forgotten, and that out of the ashes of failure something worth far more than mere passion would arise. I have come to live my life by your side, Penzie. When Forster appeared like that to me out there, I was not afraid. I recognised that he was right—he always is—and that I did wrong in leaving you. Now that he is well he will go back, but I shall stay. You are my first duty. For better for worse. Those words in the marriage service have no uncertain meaning."

Philip had spoken in a low voice, but quite calmly, now and then looking furtively at Penelope in order to see the effect his words had upon her. She still went on walking towards the house. To her, all the light of day and happiness of life seemed suddenly to be gone. Philip had come back. He was good, and kind, and grand in his ideas. He seemed now to tower over Forster, and it was almost as if morally they had changed places, but she knew that she loved the one, and that she did not love the other. The chain she wore appeared to her too galling to be borne.

"I have a good deal to tell you, Philip, but now you must be tired. We will leave all explanations till later, when the Bethunes have gone away."

Philip knew by the very tone of her voice that even his absence had not reconciled her to him. Was it quite hopeless? Anyhow, all was clear to him, his duty was to be near her. It was Forster who had first shown him that he was wrong to leave her alone, and he thanked him from the bottom of his heart.

When they entered the dining-room the Duke had already come downstairs.

"Well, Philip, this is a surprise! Why did you not write? You will find several improvements. But there are a few things waiting for your advice—and for your sanction."

"How is the King?" said Philip rather shyly.

"Better, much better, but he has not left off his wandering habits. Where is Bethune? Have you seen him? You must want your breakfast after such a long drive. You must have started very early. Penelope, my dear, you are pale to-day, what is the matter?"

The Duke always spoke in a different tone to his niece than that he used to any one

else, but to-day Penelope could not smile back. Little by little this thought, thus worded, was lodging itself in her brain: "My uncle has ruined my life, he did it—he did it. He meant well, but why did he not know all the misery he would bring about!"

"I am tired, uncle," she said aloud. "Dora is not well. I—I was looking after her."

"Not well! Then certainly they must not go to-day. You must countermand the carriage. Ah! here is Bethune himself. Well, what news?"

Forster entered looking very grave and troubled.

"Dora is not well at all. She won't say anything but that she was frightened. She began walking in her sleep, and then you saved her from further fright, I think, Mrs. Winskell."

"Shall I send for the doctor?" said Penelope, feeling that all her troubles were coming upon her at once. Then, realising that for the present flowers must be strewn over the precipice, she suddenly made an effort to hide all gloomy ideas. "But I am sure Dora will soon be well. It will only make a few days' delay, and I shall have the pleasure of your company a little longer."

She was by nature brave, and she now acted up to her character.

Of course, Forster and Philip plunged into the affairs of the settlement, such as what each man was doing, how they were managing their farms, and what prospects there were of good returns for the money.

"You must go and see Jack when you can tear yourself from the Rothery," said Forster, trying to speak quite naturally, but Penelope noted the effort he was making over himself.

"Oh, you will explain everything better than I can," answered Philip; "besides, I shall not want to travel again for a long time to come."

"And I must return to Africa as soon as possible. How long can we trust them alone, Philip?" and thus the talk continued.

Directly breakfast was over, Penelope rose and left the two together. She felt that she had much to do before she took the great step upon which she was meditating. She would show Philip that it had all been a mistake, and restore him the money he had given so willingly. First she must see her father and make him realise the value of the hidden treasure. His wicked avarice had brought all this misfortune upon the

house of Rothery, and he must now do what he could to make up for the evil he had wrought.

She hurried along the old stone passage haunted by the footsteps of a former Winskell, and then, pushing open a swing door, she entered the old wing, which by the King's special orders had not been repaired. His room was at the end, on the ground floor, of one of the old turrets. Out of his room one ascended some winding stairs leading to the bare, desolate chambers, and here, in this part of the Palace at least, Penelope felt like her old self.

HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINEERING.

INTERESTING books on mountaineering are few and far between, partly because real mountaineering experts are not numerous, and partly because being a mountaineering expert does not necessarily give the climber the gift of being able to tell of what he has done and seen in a readable fashion. But in Mr. Conway's book* we have a volume by an authority, and also one which is eminently interesting and readable.

The points of the book which are most generally interesting are those dealing with the giant mountains and huge glaciers of the Himalayas, and therefore we need not follow him too closely throughout his journey, the story of which he tells from his departure from London on the fifth of February, 1892. The party then consisted of six members, "to wit, Mr. A. D. McCormick, the well-known artist; his friend and mine, Mr. J. H. Roudebush; Mr. O. Eckenstein; Mattias Zurbriggen, the Alpine guide of Macugnaga; Parbir Thapa, a sepoy of the First Battalion of the Fifth Gurkhas; and myself." At Abbotabad the party was reinforced by the Honourable C. G. Bruce, of the same regiment, and four more Gurkhas. These Gurkhas were throughout invaluable to the expedition; looking upon every difficulty as a thing to be overcome, and not shirked, and bearing hardships and dangers without a murmur.

The mountains proper would be first encountered after leaving Gilgit, whither the party set forth from Abbotabad on the twenty-eighth of March, travelling by way of the Vale of Kashmir, partly by Ekkas—the ordinary one-horse, two-wheeled, springless native vehicle—and partly by

* "Climbing and Exploration in Karakoram-Himalayas," by William Martin Conway, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.G.S. T. Fisher Unwin.

canal, while at Srinagar all apparatus of civilised life was left behind, and all else divided into burdens not exceeding fifty pounds.

During the wait here a picnic was organised to the Dal Lake, which is worthy of description :

"Presently the waterway widened, and our men forced the flat-bottomed craft with bolder strokes over the calm lake. Floating fields, moored to the bottom by stakes, replaced the canal banks on either hand. It was delicious to lie and silently watch the hills mirrored in the lake, and the band of fresh green between them, or backwards to look over the line of trees to mountains blue as the sky, crested with snow-fields bright and ethereal as clouds. . . . There were lotus plants floating in the water, and the paddles of the boats we passed twinkled in the sunlight."

This makes a complete and wonderful contrast to the wild scenery which it was Mr. Conway's object to explore and survey.

Before Gilgit was reached the Burzil Pass had to be crossed. This occupied some days on account of the snow, which necessitated the passing of two or three days in the tents, while when in motion it was always difficult to keep the coolies at their work. They seem to have been a most unwilling lot of workers, and to have evinced a preference to sitting down every fifty yards, saying that they would die where they were ; it would be quite as easy as on the top !

But the pass was won, and comparing it with Alpine passes, Mr. Conway says :

"The pass in the condition we found it was not like an Alpine pass. It presented no mountaineering difficulties, and no dangers except from storm or loss of way in fog. But it was most fatiguing. Almost every step was upon soft snow, and this grew from bad at the start to worse at the middle, and worst at the end. For the few moments when the sun shone upon us through a clear sky the heat was intolerable."

At Astor they were entertained by the Raja with a game of polo. As the game proceeded with no prospect of ceasing, the Raja was asked how long they went on playing, the answer being :

"As long as your honour pleases."

"Do you have a fixed number of goals for a game?"

"As many as your honour pleases."

"Well, how long do they like to play?"

"It will delight them to play till your honour gives the order for them to stop."

One other anecdote before we reach Gilgit and plunge into glaciers and peaks, which shows that the English rustic in his thickheadedness and general lack of information has his counterpart in the Valley of Kashmir. On approaching Gilgit a native was met and asked :

"Where does the Colonel Sahib live?"

"Don't know."

"The Colonel Sahib—Durand Sahib?"

"Don't know." Being taken by the shoulders: "Salaam!" he said.

"The Colonel Sahib—where does he live? Are you asleep?"

"Salaam!"

"Where are the tents of the sahibs—the English?"

"Salaam!"

"Ass of Gilgit! Where is the fort?"

"I have never seen a fort or sahibs. Salaam! I know nothing."

From Gilgit the object was to explore the Nushik Pass which leads to Nagyr from Baltistan, and here the real mountaineering commences. With incidents so thick it is of course impossible to follow the party step by step, so we can only pick them up from time to time. Their first glacier was the Bagrot glacier, which was found to be an advancing glacier, full of crevasses, and seracs large and small, and so broken up as to appear to be by no means an easy highway to the upper regions. It was the first experience of some of the party of glacier walking. "They amused me by pulling one another, unintentionally, out of the steps, and exchanging mutual recriminations with utmost volubility." The Gurkhas were also taken out to practise step-cutting on the glacier, and to learn the use of the rope and of their climbing irons. They were easy to teach, and delighted their instructor by the free way in which they went along edges of ice and across deep slopes beside deep crevasses. They all worked with such vigour that they smashed two of the ice axes.

Further on, McCormick, Zurbriggen, and Conway loaded up a couple of coolies, shouldered burdens themselves, and started off for a high bivouac, as near as they could come to the head of the southern branch of the Kamar Valley. They made their bivouac at twelve thousand seven hundred feet, and the next day ascended to sixteen thousand two hundred and eighty feet, part of the time pushing their way, waist deep, through the snow. The descent had to be gone about with great care, the rocks being very steep, successive slabs set up on end

and divided from one another by narrow ledges. Although various plans and attempts had been made for crossing the pass to Nagyr, they had not been successful, and it was decided that Conway and Zurbriggen should make one final attempt before returning to Gilgit. They ascended to Windy Camp, which they had occupied before—twelve thousand six hundred and ten feet—and after surveys, Zurbriggen was satisfied that the peak would be ascended if one day of fine weather was granted to free it of the fresh snow, and two more for the climb; but the weather changed, and the snow and storm bade fair to drive them back. An effort, however, they determined to make, and left the camp at five o'clock.

"We crossed the glacier at the foot of the great icefall from the Emerald Pass, and in three-quarters of an hour we were close to the edge of a meadow from which our buttress sprang. Zurbriggen and I had no more than set foot on the grass, when we beheld a huge avalanche-cloud descending over the whole width of the icefall, utterly enveloping both it and a small rock-rib and couloir beside it. Bruce and the Gurkhas were below the rib, and could only see up the couloir. They thought the avalanche was a small one confined to it, and so they turned back and ran towards the foot of the icefall. . . . We had no means of guessing the amount of solid snow and ice that there might be in the heart of the cloud. The rumble increased in loudness, and was soon a thunder that swallowed up our puny shouts, so that Bruce could not hear our warning. Zurbriggen and I cast ourselves upon our faces, and an ordinary strong wind reached us. Our companions were completely enveloped in it. They afterwards described to us how they raced away like wild men, jumping crevasses which they could not have cleared in cold blood. When the snow-dust enveloped them, the wind raised by it cast them headlong on the ice. This, however, was the worst. The snow peppered them all over, and soaked them to the skin; but the solid part of the avalanche was happily arrested in the midst of the icefall, and never came in sight."

After this the climb was resumed, and a height of fifteen thousand six hundred and eighty feet was reached, but snow falling heavily all night, and threatening, by means of avalanches, to cut off all retreat, the ascent was abandoned. Before the descent one of the Gurkhas, Amar Sing, nearly came to grief. Starting down

after an ibex which had come down from higher up, killed by a falling rock, he tried to glissade, but making a mistake, he got into the icy trough of the avalanche, lost his footing, and came rattling down. Turning over on to his face, he clutched wildly at the ice. Fortunately, after descending about two hundred feet, he was tossed, by some bulge in the surface of the ice, into a heap of soft snow. But he continued his descent—in a gentler manner—and helped to find the body of the ibex.

The journey, on the restart from Gilgit, was to lead to Askole by way of Baltit, Nagyr, and the Hispar Pass, by innumerable mountains and glaciers. In the Samaiyar Valley glacier, in their ascent the party found everywhere accumulations of deep new snow, and not a peak approachable, while as the sunlight grew strong the slopes awoke and began to toss off their white mantles. "In particular a peak or rather a culminating portion of a long ridge west of the Samaiyar glacier sent down avalanches of all sizes, one after another; the growling of its batteries became continuous, and remained so for several hours." The camp on this night was at fifteen thousand one hundred and thirty feet.

Between Nagyr and Hobar they were surrounded by mountains, though clouds unfortunately veiled the summits of many of the highest peaks; but there was plenty to be seen. "We looked straight up the Bualtar glacier and could identify the flanks of the crown of Dirran, the two Burchi peaks, and the Emerald Pass. The summit of the Emerald peak was never disclosed. Round to the north-east we had before us, one above another, the many parallel ridges that cut up the country between Gujal and Hispar. Most interesting to us and most conspicuous was the long line of high snow-peaks which bound the Hispar Valley on the north, and under which we must go to reach the Hispar Pass. Behind them were the giants of Gujal; next, in clouded splendour, round to the left, came the wondrous mass of Hunza, and further round the nameless mountains of Budlas which we never beheld unclouded." Of these it was the Hispar Pass which was to be attacked, and which constituted the main difficulty of this route.

While among the precipices of Awkbassa—which divide the Shallihuru from the Samaiyar Bar glacier—Roudebush had a narrow escape. "After passing the narrow passage, I was about to tread on a broad

mass of ice which bridged a chasm, and over which the caravan went a few minutes before, when I heard what seemed to be a shrill whistle in Roudebush's neighbourhood. I paused, and at that instant the mass of ice I was going to have stepped on cracked up and tumbled into the crevasse it had bridged, making thunder in its descent. I sent Roudebush's coolie and a Gurkha to see what he wanted and to show him the route; they found him half-way down a crevasse into which he had been knocked by a sliding stone. He was caught with a shoulder against one side and a knee against the other, and was thus suspended about twenty feet above a rushing torrent of water, close to a moulin. He could not extricate himself, but they pulled him out by aid of the coolie's long shawl. He lost his hat and stick, but was not hurt. He did not whistle, but shouted. I certainly heard no shout."

On the journey from Mir to Hispar, as the party was approaching the mouth of a deep narrow side nala, they encountered a mud avalanche. A noise like thunder was heard, and a vast black wave was seen advancing down the nala at a rapid pace. When they reached the edge of the nala the main mass of the stuff had gone by, and only a thick stream of mud, which gradually became more liquid, was rushing by; but before they could cross, another huge avalanche came sweeping down.

"It was a horrid sight. The weight of the mud rolled masses of rock down the gully, turning them over and over like so many pebbles, and they dammed back the muddy torrent and kept it moving slowly, but with accumulated volume. Each of the big rocks that formed the vanguard of this avalanche weighed many tons; the largest being about ten foot cubes. The stuff that followed them filled the nala to a width of about forty and a depth of about fifteen feet. The thing moved down at a rate of perhaps seven miles an hour. . . . Three times did the nala yield a frightful offspring of this kind, and each time it found a new exit into the main river below."

Arrived at the Hispar glacier, when Mr. Conway could perceive the whole length and breadth of it, he found it a mighty one—far vaster than any glacier he had ever imagined. The last twenty miles were entirely covered with stones. The surface appeared to be level, and there were no icefalls to be surmounted. "There was nowhere any visible trace of life or man.

It was a glimpse into a world that knows him not. Grand, solemn, unutterably lonely—such, under the soft grey light, the great Hispar glacier revealed itself."

At the foot of the glacier were two well-marked paths—one leading immediately on to and across it, the other being on the way to the alps on the south banks. Conway's party chose the latter.

Further investigation of the glacier soon took place. The second day of the crossing Conway started shortly after five a.m., and spent some hours on it, crossing over nearly to its centre.

"It is a wonderful sight—everywhere swollen into great stone-covered mounds, broken by a black, icy cliff here and there, and dotted with lakes. The thing is on so vast a scale that it takes time to realise its immensity. There are several areas of stony and earthy surface which had evidently remained undisturbed by crevasse convulsions for many years. . . . The whole surface was one mounded grey expanse; more resembling the mid-Atlantic on a grey stormy day than anything else in the world. The stone avalanches that kept pouring down the slopes of the mounds were not unlike the breaking of waves."

At Hagtutun, in the crown of the Hispar glacier, the party divided, most to make their way to Askole by way of the Nushik La, while Conway and his division were to try the Hispar Pass. The first night's camp was pitched in a little meadow at the height of fourteen thousand one hundred feet, with a minimum temperature of twenty-eight degrees. The next day they began to enter the domain of snow, which, as they advanced, became thicker and thicker until the crevasses began to be bridged with it. The camp for the second night—Snowfield Camp—was at the height of fifteen thousand two hundred and forty feet, and the third day was spent in the camp, with a superb view spread out, with glaciers and peaks large and small.

"The ridge that runs from the Nushik to the Hispar Pass, rises in a mighty wall direct from the surface of the glacier, and it was this that was ever before our eyes during the day of our halt. It is draped from end to end in shining white. The whole face is swept from end to end by avalanches, and their furrows engrave all its slopes. There are many ice precipices and hanging glaciers. Falls of ice and snow were constantly taking place, and the boom and rattle of avalanches was almost continuous. The average height of the

ridge is considerable, but there are few noticeable peaks rising above the rest. Opposite to us was the finest of these—a hoary giant, the Ridge peak. Further on to the left two or three needles of rock stood on the crest in daring isolation, fore-runners of the group of towers with which the Biafo glacier was to make us acquainted.”

The next day they approached the pass itself, with great toil, the snow being soft, and the plateau up the gentle slope of which they had to wade appearing endless, and their strength being reduced by the diminished density of the air; but by noon the top was reached, and the slope was bending down before their feet. They had expected to look down such a long valley as they had come up, “but there was no valley in sight. Before us lay a basin or lake of snow. This lake was bounded to north and east by white ridges, and to the south by the splendid row of needle peaks, the highest of which, the Ogre, had looked at us over the pass two days before. From the midst of the snowy lake rose a series of mountain islands white like the snow that bound their bases, and there were endless bays and straits as of white water nestling amongst them. It was the vast blank plain that gave so extraordinary a character to the scene, and the contrast between this and the splintered needles that jutted their ten thousand feet of precipice into the air, and almost touched the flat roof of threatening clouds that spread above them.” Mr. Conway says that this was beyond all comparison the finest view of mountains he had ever beheld, “nor do I believe the world can hold a finer,” and indeed it is not difficult to believe him. The height of the pass is seventeen thousand six hundred and fifty feet. The downward journey was resumed with anxiety, for the outlet from the great snow basin was not visible from the top, and there were not a few indications that suggested that they might find themselves shut in by a giant icefall, but the misgivings were unnecessary, the outlet was found, and before their eyes sloped away, broad, even, and almost straight, the grand stream of the Biafo glacier, with its wonderful avenue of peaks which rise on both sides of the glacier for some fifteen miles, “one beyond the other, a series of spires, needle-sharp, walled about with precipices on which no snow can rest, and separated from one another by broken couloirs, wherein tottering masses of snow are for awhile caught till they fall

in overwhelming masses on the slopes at their feet. The aiguilles of Chamonix are wonderful, and possess a grace of outline all their own; but these needles outjut them in steepness, outnumber them in multitude, and retrench them in size. The highest of them flings its royal summit more than twenty-three thousand feet into the air, and looks abroad over a field of mountains that finds no superior in the world.” Down this glacier the road lay to Askole, which was duly reached. From here the party made a journey to the east, where the country is studded with huge peaks, with the object of making various ascents, returning to Askole, and then continuing the journey southwards.

Of these ascents the most space is given to that of Pioneer Peak. The start was made on the twenty-first of August, and the way lay at first over the seracs to the glacier, which is divided into three sections, and the first thing to be done was to find a way from the central division to the smooth level of the northern; to do this a short series of schrunds had to be passed through, and a steep slope or broken ice wall surmounted. After an unsuccessful attempt—frustrated by a crevasse insufficiently bridged—it was determined to form the camp where they were, and leave the next stage of the advance until the next day. The camp was christened Serac Camp—eighteen thousand two hundred feet. The twenty-second was occupied by Zurbriggen and Bruce in endeavouring to find the way through to the plateau; others of the party were engaged in bringing up stores from a lower camp. On the twenty-third a start was made at six-thirty in magnificent weather, the way lying across hard-frozen snow. After crossing a series of snow bridges before the sun weakened them, the plateau was reached in forty minutes, and camp was formed—Lower Plateau Camp, nineteen thousand feet—and stores carried up from Serac Camp. In the morning the thermometer read twenty-four degrees; hung outside the tent at noon it registered no less than one hundred and three degrees; in the afternoon snow began to fall lightly, and the thermometer dropped to seventy degrees; while the minimum temperature at night was twenty-three degrees. The next day a long snow slope, hard as a board, had to be climbed, to the foot of the arête, but the climbing irons which were used obviated the necessity of cutting steps all the way up. As it was, the mountaineers walked

without a halt from bottom to top in fifty-five minutes, and the tent was set up at Upper Plateau Camp—twenty thousand feet. Zurbriggen and two Gurkhas returned to the lower camp for baggage, taking twenty-seven minutes for the descent and an hour and three-quarters for the re-ascent, "though the snow remained perfectly hard, the difference in time being solely due to enervation caused by the heat of the sun." That night the minimum temperature was sixteen degrees. The next day the preparations for a start took some time, for every movement was a toil. "After lacing a boot, one had to lie down and take breath before one could lace up the other." But at five minutes to six all were ready, and the tents were left with McCormick, who was suffering from toothache and headache, and a start was made upwards. For an hour the party plodded up a long snow slope which led to a ridge, along which a quarter of an hour's walk brought them to the first peak—twenty thousand seven hundred feet. Beyond this first point ensued a difficult rock scramble, with steep slopes or walls of ice descending to the glacier below, and forcing the climbers to keep to the very centre of the ridge; and further on a steep face of mingled rock and ice had to be scrambled up, with the expectation of better things beyond. Unfortunately the ridge leading to the second peak was not of snow, but of hard ice covered with a thin layer of snow, where every step taken had to be cut through the snow into the ice. The time taken to traverse this ridge to the second peak—twenty-one thousand three hundred and fifty feet—was an hour and ten minutes. From here the white ridge lit up straight before them, and the ascent became altogether monotonous, and every step had to be hewn with the axe.

"Our advance was necessarily slow, and the terrible heat which the burning sun poured upon our heads did not add to its rapidity. There was plenty of air upon the actual ridge, and now and again a puff would come down upon and quicken us into a little life; but for the most part we were in the midst of aerial stagnation which made life intolerable. Such conditions dull the observing faculties. I heard the click, click, of Zurbriggen's axe, making the long striding steps, and I mechanically struggled from one to the other. I was dimly conscious of a vast depth down below on the right, filled with tortured glacier and gaping crevasses of monstrous size." But gradually the slope became less steep, and

to avoid a larger mass of cornice than usual they kept away to the right, and presently discovered that this cornice was the actual summit of the third peak on the ridge. "We held the rope tight with all imaginable precaution whilst Zurbriggen climbed to the top. He found a firm place where all could cut out seats for themselves, and thus at two forty-five p.m. we entered upon well-earned repose." A stay was made until four, when they started on their downward way, and in a little more than half an hour had reached the rock of the second peak. The descent was not made without a narrow escape from an accident. The party was in the following order: Harkbir, a Gurkha, was leading; Conway was second; Zurbriggen was last; Bruce and Amar Sing being some way off. Harkbir had no climbing irons, and the steps were half melted off.

"The time came when, as I expected, one gave way, and Harkbir went flying forwards. I was holding the rope tight, and was firm on my claws, and Zurbriggen had the rope tight behind me. The slope was very steep, but we easily held Harkbir. We were not descending straight down the slope, but traversing it diagonally. As soon, therefore, as Harkbir had fallen, he swung round with the rope, like a weight on the end of a pendulum, and came to rest, spread-eagled against the icy face. Now came the advantage of having a cool-headed and disciplined man to deal with. He did not lose his axe or become flustered, but went quietly to work, and after a time cut a hole for one foot, and another for the other; then he got on his legs and returned to the track, and we continued the descent. At the time, the whole incident seemed quite unexciting and ordinary, but I have often shivered since to think of it. The ice slope below us where the slip happened was fully two thousand feet long." The camp was safely reached, and that night, with a minimum temperature to ten degrees, was the last spent at the high altitude. From here a return was made to Askole, where we will leave Mr. Conway and his party, for the greater part of their work was done, and the remainder of their wanderings was over less interesting ground.

To those who take an interest in wild mountain work, or enjoy good descriptions of mountain scenery, Mr. Conway's book will prove an unfailing source of pleasure, for there is hardly a dull page in it, while the illustrations are numerous and effective, being mostly from photographs, and giving

a good idea of the wildness and dignity of the various mountains and glaciers seen in the course of the journey.

THE FIFTEENTH OF JUNE OFF JAN MAYEN.

JAN MAYEN is an island of bare rock situated in the Arctic Ocean, within the Circle, latitude seventy-two, longitude fifteen west. It is well known to sealers, being accounted a favourite landmark for the assembling ground of the old "bladder" or crested seal, which has a fancy for more southern latitudes than its brethren. Other than this, however, it is of no importance, save to the myriads of sea-fowl that darken the sky at the approach of a stranger foot, and find a safe nesting in the clefts and crannies of its lonely sides.

April saw us far north in latitude eighty, among the old "saddlebacks," where we had some fortune; May took us to the whaling grounds in latitude seventy-eight, where we had none; and now June finds us in search of the bladders.

Every one knows that seals in the early spring bring forth their young on a pupping ground selected for that purpose. Millions and millions will thus come together, covering vast fields of ice, so wide that even the powerful long glass from the crow cannot circle them. Each species has its own ground, and there are no outsiders. Unity is the watchword of the seal.

After the pupping is over the seals betake themselves to a new ground for the purpose of basking in the sun and generally enjoying themselves after the wishes of seal nature. And to find this point, which seems vast on land, but is yet a very small speck indeed on the wide Arctic Ocean, is the one hope of the sealer.

Shortly after leaving the whaling grounds we were so fortunate as to cross the line of bladders from the north. Crossing their line means that we noticed now and then ranks of bobbing black-heads ploughing steadily in one direction. And this direction duly noted, we shifted our course, and have now steered four hundred miles to half a point on the compass.

For several days we have not seen so much as a seal's head, but still we hold on our course, blindly as it were. We hope for the best; but we are anxious. More so than we might have been, had not a dense Arctic fog dropped suddenly and caused us to lie by for seventy-five hours.

It is the morning of the fifteenth. Thump! Thump! The stout "Narwhal" quivers from stem to stern, and my head beats a couple of dull notes upon the bulk-head. Again we strike something heavily. There is a hideous noise of grinding and scraping at the bow, which creeps slowly aft and then ceases.

"Some dunderhead on the bridge," say I; yawn, turn over, and try to catch a glimpse of the cabin clock. At this instant one of the watch begins to strike, and strikes seven bells. I must get up.

On deck a harpooner paces the bridge. This, then, is the fool who goes charging into ice. It is like him. He is not a favourite of mine, although he is in the spectioneer's watch.

A light south-wester fills the staysails, and lays us over a little. The sea is rippled like a lake, and dotted with innumerable ice-blocks far as the eye can see, and a soft wash, wafted from the largest, indicates the presence of a faint swell. A glorious sun pours from an almost Italian sky. Birds flash around us, like the insect life on a spring day in merry England. And away on the horizon, north, south, east, and west, is one sheet of glittering white, where the ice line meets its own reflection in the far sky.

We are threading our way through a field of open ice.

"Port a little!" sings out the man on the bridge.

"Ay, ay, sir!" and the wheel flies over.

"Steady!"

"Steady it is!"

And so we wind hither and thither, keeping our course as we best can.

"Well, Davidson," say I to the spectioneer who comes forward from the fore-castle to the break of the poop, "have you seen anything?"

"A swimmer or two, that's all, sir," says he in a tremendous sea voice. "But we're in amongst the right stuff now."

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"Twelve-foot ice, sir. You won't get bladders on less nor that. I've seen 'em up thirty foot."

"But we got the saddlebacks on thin ice, Davidson."

"Ay, to be sure; but saddles ain't bladders, ye see, sir. They're as different in their likings as you and me." He takes a look round. "There's the wind a-going to fall off, and it'll be coal up as soon as the captain rises. And a blessing too! We'll

make more speed with the screw at it than we're doing with this 'ere catspaw."

In a few minutes up comes the captain. He takes a look at the course, then he steps up the ladder and on to the bridge.

Eight bells strike, and it is the first mate's watch on deck. The mate comes walking aft.

"Get the ship tidy, Mr. Cameron," says the captain; "the wind's dropping off." Then he steps to the telegraph. The bell rings in the engine-room, and the hand of the dial points to "Full speed ahead."

There is an instant commotion below. The shovels begin to work, and the alarming of iron doors is heard.

The captain turns to the mate.

"Any seals been seen?"

"Yes, sir; Davidson saw four in the morning watch."

"Did he take their course? How were they making?"

"Something like half a point more to the westward, sir."

"Keep that course, Mr. Cameron," says the captain. And—"There's the steward."

He descends for breakfast and we follow him. Coffee, fried ham, bread, butter, and ship's biscuit compose our fare, to which five of us sit down.

"How long will it take you to get steam up, Mr. Brown?" says the captain to the engineer—"Chief," as he is called by the ship's company.

"Twenty minutes, sir," says he promptly, and keeps a forkful of ham under his nose, as he looks across the table expectantly. But the captain is not in a talkative frame, so the chief buries the ham and half the fork with it, and the conversation for the meal closes.

When we reach the deck once more, after our twenty minutes' repast, the wind has already slipped away. The sea lies like a sheet of pearl; a very shadow-glass for the feathered world. Mollies sweep around us, keeping a watchful eye on the cook's pipe. Here and there a great grey, yellow-beaked, yellow-legged burgie circles us with a dissonant croak. And far, far astern sit flocks of lovely snowbirds, showing on the broken water of our wake like a fairy fall of water-lilies.

Aloft, also, circling over the crow's-nest, are a score of sea-swallows. And over the starboard bow two or three boatwain birds are hovering.

The fireman is shovelling again; the furnace doors slam loudly, and an extra mass of smoke pours from the funnel.

Then a tremor runs through the ship, and the screw begins to turn with a long-drawn "whic-whooh" as it scoops up the water.

I step forward to the forepeak, where Mackintosh, a harpooner, is spying the horizon with the fore-castle glasses. The first is ascending the main ratlines to the crow. The ship vibrates soothingly to the action of the engines, and the water splashes merrily at our bow.

Looking ahead, I see the crystal surface of the ocean broken by an animal. A black something rises, and now it is a floe-rat. It swims across us, and as we near, dives; appearing again astern with the suddenness of a sunk bottle.

Many of these pretty little creatures we see sporting about at the ice-edges. And now in front of us are three black-and-white "roches" or little auks. These are quaint little birds with a peculiarly pleasing note. They find a great difficulty in rising from the surface, for their wings are very small and fin-like. Yet I have seen flocks of them, when in full flight from Greenland to their feeding grounds, flying at nothing short of forty miles an hour.

They await our approach with few signs of fear, taking us to be a whale, no doubt; but when not more than twenty yards away they are seized with a sudden fright, try to rise, fail, and finally dive. Can't they dive, too! And what a strangely beautiful effect they have! See them far down, their wings going like fins, and their whole body, in fact the whole circle made by their pinions, of the bluest blue, making the sea seem colourless.

I am still watching them when there is a shout from the mast-head. Every eye looks up. I see the first leaning over the rim of the nest. And now he shouts to the captain:

"Seals on the port bow, sir!"

"Seals!" says each, and there is a sort of choked huzzah from the deck.

"What do you make of them?" sings out the captain. And then: "Starboard a little! Steady as you go!" to the man at the wheel.

"Seems to be a big body of them, sir," cries the mate. "But they're a good bit off."

The captain signs to Mackintosh to take the bridge, and in a few moments he is going aloft up the ratlines.

The first sees him, hastily packs up the long glass, opens the lid of the nest, and tumbles out. He stands at the topgallant crossbar and waits.

A short conversation and they divide ; the first descending with all rapidity, like a cat down a straight tree-trunk.

I await him on the half-deck.

"Yes, sir, we've hit 'em. In two hours we'll be working through the edge of them. And if the captain goes off a bit, for a patch yonder, we'll be drawing blood in the inside of an hour."

I really cannot help giving a slight huzzah, and follow it by a hand over hand up the main-brace.

The first has gone forward, and the men who should be below are now all on deck, dressed in a strange variety of toggery. Some surround the mate, and others are fighting almost heatedly for the possession of the focsle glasses.

The captain, after a long look, now shifts our course, and calls down :

"All hands ready for sealing!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" says the first, and immediately there is bedlam.

Every one hastens below, and the noise rising shortly through the main hatch is like the clatter of an army of young starlings whose respective parents have been taking a half-hour off.

Time slips past, and the fore-part is now crowded with men fully prepared and waiting. The boats, long since cleared of the whale tackle, are now furnished with seal clubs, and provisions and water-cask in case of necessity in the lockers. Most of the men are in white canvas jumpers and wide half-trousers. Their towing-lines and long, curved finching-knives are at their middles. A dangerous-looking crowd they make of sixty men odd.

I am prepared also. My rifle and ammunition are lying on the engine-room top. I have a supply of tobacco, and my pockets are full of biscuits.

We are nearing the first patch of seals, and now little more than fifty yards separates us. There is no order from the crow's-nest to lower away, so the rifles take up a position at the bow.

They are now quite near. How the creatures stare! I count six of them, and notice one huge old male, or grandfather, as the men call these. Three of them rear up, and—

Bang! Bang!

We seem to have fired in two parties; and out of six seals we have only got three. The remainder slip off the ice-edge, raising wreaths of broken water. The grandfather I fired at remains; but I pride myself unnecessarily, for he has three bullets in him.

"Stop the engines!" bawls the captain. "Lower away a quarter-boat and finch those seals! Quick about it, too!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The engines cease throbbing, and down drops the port quarter-boat with a splash as the falls are let go. The ice-block is astern, and the boat is now pulling swiftly towards it. In two minutes the seals are finched and the boat is alongside. The falls are hooked on; the bell rings in the engine-room; there is a clank of machinery starting; the water begins to churn white round the propeller, and we are off.

I look over the taffrail, as the boat is being hauled up by every man that can lay hand on the ropes. A perfect cloud of birds hangs over the ice-block astern; a wheeling, darting, shrieking throng. Burgies and mollies fight thickly together, croaking and cackling with the excited fury of a French mob. Now and then a great tern swoops downward like a falcon into the midst of them, and engages on all sides. Or a full dozen at a time, when the battle rages indeed with surpassing madness.

But smaller and smaller grow the combatants, and now the noise of contest has passed away.

We are in the thick of the seals. On all sides we notice them as black specks on the gleaming ice-blocks. Some over the starboard chains are quite close to us.

"Stop the engines! Spectioneer's watch lower away," calls down the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir!" in a chorus.

The orders are obeyed promptly. The starboard boats are slipped, and the men are scrambling over the side like monkeys.

"Come away, sir!" cries Davidson, in his deep, cheery voice.

"Right," say I. And in ten seconds I am in the foresheets.

The falls are unhooked. Davidson gives a push with his oar, and then, altogether, the six larch blades dip in the sea, and at each stroke gather a harvest of pearls out of the ocean's depths.

The other boat is waiting for its harpooner, and the steersman is beginning to swear volubly. Our men give way with a will, and the boat flies on like a torpedo.

"There goes the first's watch," says one of the men, as two boats drop from the davits, and soon after slip from under the shadow of her lines. But no one takes any heed. Two seals are ahead of us. Their heads hang over the edge, and they seem to be asleep.

The spectioneer unships his oar, kneels opposite me, and takes up his rifle.

"Stop rowing, lads," And the oars are motionless.

The boat steadies. Our eye seeks the head. Two reports sound as one, and the seals shot through the head lie as if they were still sleeping. The oars dip again, and the boat crushes against the ice. No time is lost in the flinching. The blubbered skins are quickly aboard, and the men at the oars.

Two great striped grandfathers are the next. Mine is not shot dead, gives a spasmodic jerk, slips over the edge into the sea, and is lost.

Now we have a large patch in view. They seem to be late arrivals, and as such wide awake. There are something like twenty, packed almost like sheep in a pen. Their tails are cocking, and those inland a little are making for the edge. We shall not likely get more than a shot apiece.

As the rowers rest, one alarmed ancient tumbles off with a mighty splash. And then, with wild haste, the whole body pop into the sea, making the immediate circle like a boiling cauldron.

"Well, lads, that's good-bye," says Davidson, laying down his rifle and taking the stroke oar again. "We'll be a long time afore we fill up with them, boys."

The next are somewhat wakeful too; but the crew yell "Lie! lie! lie! lie! lie!" in deafening concord. Sufficient, one would think, to frighten the entire inhabitants of the Arctic Ocean. Not so, however; it has a good effect, seeming to bewilder, or mesmerize the creatures into a state of semi-quietness.

We get four out of six by this means, and are well pleased.

We are now approaching a round dozen of beauties, mostly all grandfathers. They have been some time on the ice. They see us; they stare at us, but they will not so much as lift their heads.

"Now, sir," says Davidson to me, "shoot clean. No wounding; and we've that lot, and a full boat too."

"All right," say I, "mind your eye too."

"I'll do that, sir. And if so be you wounds first I'll have a pound o' baccy from ye."

"Done! And I'll have the bear's teeth in your chest."

"All right, sir. A pound o' cabin baccy, mind," and he chuckles deeply inside himself.

"Stop rowing." The men rest, and the boat glides on.

Davidson fires first. The heads rise at once. But the one shot lies still, so the others take courage from the fact, think it is all right, and sink again.

I take the next one, and the same thing happens, only there are now two lying quiet to ensure courage. The first one, however, that is wounded, we know is the signal for dispersal. So we take time, shooting alternately. And now the last seal is dead.

The finchers scramble on to the ice, and set to work with the quickness of experts. And one by one the heavy skins are thrown into the boat, sinking her lower and lower.

"That's the way to fill a boat," cries the spectioneer, stepping in. "Now, lads, for the ship!"

We have not been away an hour when we run alongside the "Narwhal" with whaler-like deftness. All save one man scramble on board. Only three skins are on deck. The switch tackle is set and ready; the hook is let down into the boat; two skins are attached. "Right!" cries the man. The winch rattles merrily, and up they come, falling flop on the half-deck. They are unhitched, and the process repeated.

In eight minutes we are away again, with the cook and a fireman watching us jealously over the chains.

Thus the hours slip by, and the pile of skins rises steadily on the half-deck. No one has time to feel tired. We have made five journeys and are returning for the sixth time. It is eleven thirty a.m. At eleven forty-five I spring on deck, and for the sixth time the switch tackle empties our freight.

"Are you coming, sir?" cries Davidson, as he prepares to go over the side.

"Wait!" sing I. "I'm out of tobacco."

I plunge hastily down the companion, and seize a lump of the captain's that lies on the table. And now we are off for the seventh time.

But the fifteenth of June is drawing to a close. It is almost midnight. The fiery sun is low down on the rim of the horizon, lipping the sea. Sunset and sunrise commingling are sheeting the heavens in surpassing splendour. The water is ablaze with light. It seems as if the dome above us were the window of a vast volcano. The ice crystals gather in the mysteries of colour, and far off the glittering ice-field clothes itself in the melting glories of dreamland.

The "Narwhal" alone lies dark against

the emerald and crimson northward, every ratline showing with the clearness of a gossamer thread on a summer's morning.

"Ay, sir," says Davidson, "it's amazin' beautiful. It do be."

"Yes," say I, "it is." And that is all.

The boat slips on, and now, slowly, very slowly the great blazing orb rises upward, and the fifteenth of June is ended.

BRITISH SNAKE LORE.

SUPERLATIVE ophiolatry died in Britain with the Druids; a Druid himself being, according to Davies's translation of Taliessin, Appendix 6, "... Druid ... architect ... prophet ... serpent.—Gnadr." Perhaps the single direct survival of the worship is the belief in Cornwall and Wales that snakes meet in companies on Midsummer Eve, join their heads together, and, by hissing, form a kind of bubble round the head of one of them, and so continuing to hiss and blow on the said bubble, cause it to fall off at the tail, when it immediately hardens and resembles a glass ring. This ring, worn as an amulet, is supposed to confer prosperity, success in law matters, safety of person, and other advantages, on a lucky finder. Curiously enough, Pliny, Nat. Hist., Bk. 29, Ch. 12, gives a similar account of the origin of, and credulities connected with, this snake ring, or egg—*anguinum ovum*—amongst the people of the Gallic provinces, instructed by their Druids; adding that it is totally omitted by the Greek authors. He gives an account of one that he actually saw, but this really appears to have been the shell—marine or fossil—of the *echinus marinus* (sea-urchin), for Camden, "Britannia," 1695, p. 684, says of the real stones:

"They are small glass annulets, commonly about half as wide as our finger-rings, but much thicker; of a green colour usually, tho' some of them are blue, and others curiously wav'd with blue, red, and white. I have also seen two or three earthen rings of this kind, but glaz'd with blue, and adorn'd with transverse streaks or furrows on the outside."

Davies, "Mythol. and Rites of the British Druids," 1809, p. 211, writes of these stones, called *Glain Naidr*—i.e., adderglass—that they "were artificial, can hardly admit of a doubt, though some have hastily confounded them with certain productions of nature. We find some of them blue, some white, a third sort green, and a fourth

regularly variegated with all these sorts of colours, but still preserving the appearance of glass, whilst others again were composed of earth, and only glazed over." In fact he regards the *Ovum Anguinum* as the *Insigne Druidis*, or distinguishing mark of a Druid, quoting Aneurin, the bard, who sang, "Lively was the aspect of him, who, in his prowess, had snatched over the ford that involved ball, which casts its rays to a distance, the splendid product of the adder, shot forth by serpents."

The phrase, "snatched over the ford," again singularly connects the British and Gaulish superstitions, for Pliny remarks that it was necessary for the finder to put running water between the snakes and himself.

Examples of the glain are frequently found in ancient British tumuli; and, doubtless, symbolised the resurrection, for Meilyr, another bard, calls Bardsey "The holy island of the Glain, in which there is a fair representation of a resurrection."

There are offshoots of the original superstition. Richard Carew, in his "Survey of Cornwall," writes: "The country people have a persuasion that snakes here breathing upon a hazel wand produce a stone ring of blue colour, in which there appears the yellow figure of a snake, and that beasts bit and envenom'd being given some water to drink, wherein this stone has been infus'd, will perfectly recover of the poison." Mr. Hunt, in his "Popular Romances of the West of England," says the country people now declare that it is not safe to venture on the Downs at Land's End without a milpreve—possibly from millepore—which a correspondent of his affirms to be coralline limestone, the sections of the coral passing for entangled young snakes.

Apart from these, however, we have in Britain many strange credulities regarding the snake; strange in that the reptile is here insignificant in size, and comparatively weak in venom; though occasionally, withal, a suggestion of reverence may be observed in connection with it, a little due to vague traditional worship, and somewhat born of physical repugnance. In Sussex, they say these lines are written on the adder's belly:

If I could hear as well as see
No man or beast should pass by me.

A belief in the deafness of the adder is, or was, a vulgar error throughout the country; if, in truth, it was confined to the vulgar, for Randolph, in "The Muses' Looking-glass," 1638, act ii., scene 3, has, "How

blest the adders that have no ears!" There are, too, many variants of the following proverbial rhyme still current:

"If I could hear and thou couldst see,
There would none live but you and me,"
As the adder said to the blindworm.

Here are two more errors, for the blind-worm, so called, has eyes, and is not venomous. It has another name, slightly more appropriate, slow-worm, but the harmless bob-tailed creature, a link between the lizard and snake, is better called long-cripple in the West Country.

Near Leeds they say that when a snake crosses the path rain is near; and in West Sussex to kill the first snake you see in the year gives you power over your enemies for a twelvemonth, or its skin hung up in the house brings good luck to the tenant. In Shropshire, the dragonfly is the supposed harbinger of the adder, and is consequently called the Ether's Nild or Needle, and the Ether's Mon (man) in various parts of the county. In the Isle of Wight they give the insect the name snakestanger for a like reason. A sickly-looking person with a ravenous appetite is said to have a "nanny-wiper" in his or her stomach, and the only way to lure it forth, say the Sussex people, is to fill a saucer with milk and lie near it with the mouth open, feigning sleep. The nanny-wiper will shortly creep forth to drink the liquor, and may then be killed. In the North Country it is believed that if a native of Ireland draw a ring round a toad or adder, the creature cannot get out, and will die there; but, in the West Country, one should make the sign of the cross within the ring, and repeat the first two verses of the sixty-eighth Psalm. Mr. Hunt states that he once saw a snake not yet dead within a circle, and was told by a gardener that the creature had been so charmed. Gerard, in his "Herball," follows Pliny in the idea that the ash-tree is so obnoxious to the snake that it will sooner pass through a circle of fire than a ring of the leaves of that tree; but Culpepper says, "The contrary to which is the truth, as both my eyes are witness." At Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, at the present time, a snake, however maimed, is invariably hung securely over the bough of the nearest tree, so that it may not escape, for the belief lingers here, as in many parts of the country, that the crawling thing cannot die until sundown.

As a curative agent the snake, dead or alive, is thought highly of. In Suffolk

they hold that goitre may be cured in the following manner. Let a second person hold the common snake by its head and tail, and draw it slowly nine times across the diseased neck; but, after every third time, the creature must be allowed to crawl about awhile. It must afterwards be put alive into a bottle, which should be tightly corked and buried—the swelling will waste with the snake. Some say that the snake should be killed, and its skin worn round the neck. In other parts of Suffolk a Snake's Avel (skin) is worn inside the hat for headache. Mr. Black, in his "Folk Medicine," states that an old man used to sit on the steps of King's College Chapel at Cambridge selling snake sloughs (self-cast skins) for the same complaint. In some places, he goes on to say, it is used for extracting thorns, but its virtue is repellent, not attractive. For instance, a slough bound on the wounded palm of the hand would drive the thorn through to the back.

On the other hand, the old herbalists believed in innumerable preventives and cures. Viper's Bugloss was said to be both. Devil's Bit, Flower de Luce, St. John's Wort, Hedge Mustard, Mithridate Mustard, Tormentil or Septfoil, were all said to expel venom; but the crowning virtue was possessed by the crab-apple, according to a recipe current before the Conquest, preserved in MS. Harl. 585, and translated from the Anglo-Saxon by Cookayne in his "Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft," thus:

This (crab-apple) is the wort which
Wergule hight;
This sent the seal
Over seas ridge
Of other mischief
The malice to mend,
These nine can march on
'Gainst nine ugly poisons.
A worm sneaking came
To slay and to slaughter;
Then took up Woden
Nine wondrous twigs,
He smote then the nadder
Till it flew in nine bits.
There ended it the crab-apple
And its venom, that never it
Should more in house come.

It may be gathered from the context that the "nine ugly poisons" included snake venom and other violent disorders of the blood; the "nine wondrous twigs" being Mugwort, Waybread, Steem (watercress), Attorlothe, Nettle, Maythen, Wergule, Chervil, and Fennel.

In conclusion, these credulities may be mentioned. When a dog or tame beast is bitten by an adder, the wound should be washed with milk from an Irish cow, to make

a cure. A hair plucked from the tail of a living horse and immersed in water produces a water-snake—in Warwickshire they say a leech. The bride or groom whose path to the church the reptile crosses will be unhappy. The notion that snakes suck cows seems to be not entirely devoid of truth; and the old saw:

March win' (wind)

Wakens the ether and blooms the whin,

if not absolute fact, is sufficiently near for a figurative expression.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*The Thirteenth Brydala*," "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benefit of Clergy*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VII.

"You think I shall be about again come summer, sir? I'm picking up again wonderful now."

"Summer is almost here, Mrs. Wilson. It will be June in a day or two, you see."

"Bless me, sir, why so it is. The weeks do run by! It's only the other day, it seems, that I took that cold; just before you came to Mary Combe, and you've been here——"

"Four weeks exactly, Mrs. Wilson."

It was a lovely afternoon, and the sunlight was lying in great bands of yellow light across the Wilsons' kitchen. The window had a wide sill, full of flowering geraniums in pots, and just under it was a sofa—wide, old-fashioned, and comfortable. On the sofa lay Mrs. Wilson, and in a chair close to her, and facing her, was Dr. Meredith's assistant.

"The young doctor," which was the vague way in which, in preference to the more formal title of "Dr. Godfrey," Mary Combe insisted on distinguishing Dr. Meredith's assistant, had altered a good deal during those four weeks of which she spoke. No obvious alteration was perceptible; indeed, nothing which to the eyes that daily looked upon her in Mary Combe could be called alteration at all. For it was in expression alone that the change lay, and Mary Combe's perceptions took no account of such trifles as expression.

The strong mouth that had been such a feature of Althea Godfrey's face had slightly changed its curves. There was the same strength about them still, but a tiny downward set of the corners had made it obstinate instead of firm, and self-willed instead of

self-confident. The daring and mischievous glance characteristic of the defiance that had shone in her grey eyes had faded leaving them still defiant enough, it is true, but rather sombre; and that eager impulsiveness of the whole face which had formed the leading half, so to speak of its expression, was temporarily in abeyance, kept in hand by the other half—the calm, quiet self-possession. The slight figure was perhaps a trifle sligher, and seemed curiously, and yet not aggressively or exaggeratedly, at home in the grey clothes.

Dr. Godfrey smiled at Mrs. Wilson with the words; a smile that was faintly reproduced on the thin face outlined against the red sofa chintz.

Mrs. Wilson had come very near indeed to the shadow which lay before her. He almost transparent hands, her hollow eyes and burning cheeks told unmistakeably the truth, even to unprofessional eyes.

She lay quite still on her sofa for a moment after Dr. Godfrey had spoken and her unnaturally bright eyes seemed to be wandering from the geraniums to the outlook above them. All at once she moved slightly and fixed them on the young doctor's face steadily.

"You do think I'm picking up?"

She half raised herself as she ended, as if by the gesture to get nearer to the face opposite her own, and read it truly.

There was a little pause. Over Althea's face passed a momentary look of uncertainty, and a reluctant, pitying expression came into the grey eyes. The next, the uncertainty was gone, and a steady resolution had taken its place.

"I am afraid not, Mrs. Wilson."

Very firmly the words were spoken, and very gently. Mrs. Wilson let herself fall back quite suddenly on her pillows.

"You don't think I'm better? You don't think I'm stronger?"

The words came in a hoarse and hollow voice.

Dr. Godfrey rose, and drawing her chair much nearer, laid her hand on Mrs. Wilson's thin fingers. They were clasped together and were trembling.

"I am afraid not," repeated the young doctor in the same firm voice, but even more gently than before. "I think it is best to tell you the real truth. I do not think you will be about again in the summer. I do not think you will ever be strong or well again."

Althea's face was full of a very great

tenderness; her steady voice was instinct with pity and sympathy. She watched Mrs. Wilson intently as she spoke the two brief sentences that contained so much, and she saw the quivering face alter as she watched it. But not as she had expected to see it alter. A look of relief came over it, and all the restless excitement was smoothed away by a contrasting stillness.

"Thank you, sir!" The answer came after a long pause. "I daredn't ask you before, but I knew it was so; and I knew you'd tell me true."

Althea did not speak; she only laid her hand again with a reassuring pressure on the fingers that trembled far less now than in their uncertainty.

From outside came all the summer sounds; the cheery life of the village; the clatter of the children just let free from school; the chorus of birds in the elm-trees close by; and the stray note of a distant cuckoo.

"Twenty-three," said Mrs. Wilson, in a low voice; "that's all I am. It's young to die and leave it all. Does my husband know?" she added. "Have you told Tom?"

"Yes," said the young doctor gently, "he knows."

Across Althea Godfrey's mind came the quick remembrance of an evening a week before, when poor Tom Wilson had met her, and stopped her with an anxious entreaty to be told "the truth about the missus." And she had, as tenderly as she might, dealt to him the bitter blow he had dreaded for months.

A long sigh of relief was the only answer.

"Him and me, we've been very happy," she said, in a low voice.

Althea rose and took Mrs. Wilson's thin hand very tenderly in hers. "Good-bye," she said gently. "I think you'll like best to be left alone now."

"Good-bye," was the answer, "and thank you for telling me. Thank you ever so much."

Althea held the thin hand a moment longer, and then she laid it down and went out of the room into the summer sunlight. Her face was rather pale, and all its sterner curves were absorbed and lost for the moment in a great pity. The sombre defiance in her eyes was subdued by their tender, sorrowful gravity.

She turned sharply to her left as she came out, and set off at a quick pace up the hill to her own rooms in the John-sons' house. She was thinking deeply as

she walked, and she could hardly have defined what her thoughts were fixed on; she was half unconsciously living again through the just past sorrowful little scene, and the whole mystery of the sorrow of life was in her mind. The street, the sunlight, the cheery sounds around her as she walked, were all far away and indistinct; for the moment Mrs. Wilson's weak voice was the only sound she heard.

"Thea!"

The voice was close to her; the tone, though low, quick and hard.

Althea Godfrey lifted her eyes sharply. In that one instant they, and with them her whole face, had changed. The defiance in her eyes asserted itself with intense hardness, and the downward set of the corners of her mouth was emphasized to aggressiveness.

"Well!" she said.

Dr. Meredith's expression was not much pleasanter than that of his assistant. A change had come over him also. His physical appearance was much improved. He was not nearly so haggard, nor so thin; and the "driven" sort of look had left his face entirely. It was plain, in fact, that he was no longer overworked. But there was in his expression a sort of half-resigned, half-cynical toleration which was new to it, and seemed to influence every feature. And this, as he faced Althea, intensified until it was quite as aggressive as her own obstinacy.

The cause of the alteration in him was not far to seek. For the past four weeks had been to him the most difficult weeks he had experienced in all his life. In the first place he was now, at the end of them, quite as utterly unable to come to any conclusion regarding the crisis which had been their beginning, as he had been in that beginning itself. That thinking-out of the subject which had been interrupted on the Sunday of Althea's final ultimatum to him, had never yet been carried through to any practical end. Over and over had he begun it again. During long drives into the country, during lonely suppers and sleepless nights, he had approached the whole difficulty afresh, not once nor twice, but countless times.

Each time he began he had resolved that this struggle should be rewarded by some light on the matter. But each time, severally, he had failed to find any; and had, with a great and heavy despondency, relinquished the effort again.

Practically — and perhaps this was a sorer thorn in his side than even his perplexity — he had had to give in. He

had been literally obliged, as Althea had prophesied, to let her assume the position of his assistant. After her own definite public announcement of that position, and the assumption of its duties included in her attention to Mrs. Allen's child and her visit to Orchard Court, there was no choice for him but to acknowledge her as such. And having done so, he could not, naturally, refuse to let her work. So, grudgingly and reluctantly enough, he had had to apportion her her share in his daily work, and to content himself in the leisure thus produced with chafing vainly and helplessly against the compulsion. To Althea herself he had attempted no further remonstrance whatever. Indeed, his intercourse with her during the past four weeks had been as slight as it was possible to make it. If Althea believed that he had meant the words in which he had so angrily broken off their engagement on that Sunday, she had every ground for her belief. His professional orders, expressed in the briefest of words, were the only conversation he bestowed upon her. If he saw her coming he would, if possible, avoid her; if he called at her door he would scarcely ever enter it, and if he passed her in the village during the day, it was with the greeting he would have bestowed on an acquaintance whom he desired to keep at the most careful arms' length.

His whole attitude to her was one of semi-resigned, semi-cynical tolerance of an unavoidable ill; an attitude which naturally enough had left on his face the traces before alluded to.

Perhaps his feelings on the subject were enhanced a little by the fact that his assistant had become during these four weeks very popular in Mary Combe.

It had only needed a very few days to gain for Dr. Godfrey every one's good word. The slight, grey-clad figure had been greeted with appreciative smiles and nods, even on that first Sunday of all, when Dr. Meredith's assistant was met returning from Orchard Court.

The charm inherent in Althea Godfrey's grey eyes and attractive face had been felt at once by men and women alike. Of the two, the women—possibly through that affinity of sex of which they never dreamed—were the more susceptible to it. But the men were loud enough and genuine enough in their praise of "the young chap's straightforward ways," which adjective conveyed the highest form of commendation known in Mary Combe.

Altogether, his assistant's presence in Mary Combe was now a well-established and much-appreciated fact, and there were few days on which unwelcome proofs of this failed to present themselves for Dr. Meredith's notice.

A small schoolchild danced up to Althea now as they stood there, and the smiling recognition with which it was dismissed lent an extra touch of acerbity to Dr. Meredith's tone as he said shortly:

"Where have you come from?"

"Mrs. Wilson," was the short reply. "What do you want?"

His assistant spoke to Dr. Meredith in a voice that certainly did not err on the side of cordiality. It would have been difficult to realise that this was the same individual who had stood by Mrs. Wilson but ten minutes before.

"I've been to your rooms," he answered with apparently irrelevant terseness. "Can you go to Stoke Vere this afternoon? I'm sent for to Fern Morton."

"Stoke Vere?" repeated his assistant, carelessly enough. "Yes, I suppose I can. What is it?"

As she spoke Althea Godfrey was playing with a little stick she carried; balancing it, with a sort of ostentatious indifference, first on the palm of one hand and then on the other.

"What is it?" she repeated, somewhat sharply, as Dr. Meredith did not at once reply.

"Miss Swinton," he said; "Rose Swinton."

Althea Godfrey was in the act of transferring the stick from one hand to the other. She paused, sharply and suddenly; the stick dropped from her hands and fell with a little clatter into the dusty road. She raised the grey eyes which had till now been fixed on the knots in the stick to Dr. Meredith's face. She scanned it with a quick, startled scrutiny—a scrutiny that she had never bestowed on it since her arrival in Mary Combe.

He was perfectly unconscious of the look, for he was staring over her shoulder, with an abstracted look in his eyes.

"Can you go at once?" he added, in a tone the sharpness of which had a slight ring of anxiety.

Althea Godfrey moved her eyes from his face as suddenly as she had raised them. Then she stooped and very deliberately picked up her stick; not raising her head again when she had done so, but keeping her eyes steadily fixed on the ground.

"Who is Miss Rose Swinton?" she said. She spoke slowly, and there was a tone in her voice which was strange to it. "I thought your only patient at Stoke Vere was an old clergyman!"

Dr. Meredith made an inarticulate sound of impatience.

"Old clergymen have been known to possess families," he said sarcastically. "This is his daughter, his only daughter. Now, can you go at once?" he added sharply. "Because if not, say so! I'll go myself. I fully intended to go myself until a quarter of an hour ago, when this Fern Morton message came. Plague it!"

The words were spoken in a tone of keen vexation and irritation.

Althea's hands clenched suddenly round her stick. There was unusual feeling of some sort in the gesture, and also in her voice as she said even more slowly than she had spoken before:

"Yes, I'll go at once. What is wrong?"

"I don't know, that's the worst of it. The note was absurdly indefinite. However, you'll see."

Althea made a movement of assent without lifting her face, which was still fixed on the road.

"I'll send William with the cart to Johnsons' for you at once, then," he added, and turned sharply away to carry out his words.

Althea meanwhile walked up the hill very rapidly, her face still bent on the ground.

Arrived at her own rooms she electrified Mrs. Johnson by refusing, with a brusqueness of manner the good woman had never before heard from her lodger, the afternoon tea which was standing waiting for her. On the daily preparation of this refreshment Althea had at her arrival insisted with some energy. The arrangement was difficult for Mrs. Johnson to grasp at first, and furthermore she had, as she said to Mrs. Green, "never knowed no gentleman so particular to his tea" as the young doctor. This fact made it the more difficult for her to grasp the circumstances now, and she decided slowly, as from the shop she watched Dr. Godfrey spring quickly into the dog-cart, that something of grave moment indeed must have occurred.

The dog-cart was driven by William, Dr. Meredith's loquacious and invaluable man. This loquacity was apt to reach its flood when he drove "the young doctor." He had a certain awe of his master which somewhat stunted his flow of words. But

Dr. Godfrey was usually ready enough to listen to the monologue which constituted William's conversation, and the word or two which were all his listener was ever able to insert were construed by him into a gratifying encouragement.

This afternoon, sure of a sympathetic audience, he launched, in the first quarter of a mile, into one of his longest recitals. It lasted for some twenty minutes or so, and then a shock awaited William. He discovered that his usually ready listener had not been listening at all, as was proved by the wondering face turned to him when he ended with a question. Dr. Godfrey apologised abstractedly for this, and William relapsed into a silent and injured surprise, which lasted until they turned into the garden of Stoke Vere Rectory. It was still brighter and more flowery now on this May afternoon than it had been when Dr. Meredith had ridden over to see Mr. Swinton four weeks before.

The neat, middle-aged servant who opened the door in answer to Dr. Godfrey's ring, hesitated a moment at the sight of a strange face.

"I am Dr. Meredith's assistant," Dr. Godfrey said briefly. With a glance at the cart and William the maid's hesitation vanished.

"This way, please, sir," she said, and Dr. Godfrey followed her half-way down the long passage through which Rose Swinton herself had preceded Dr. Meredith on that evening four weeks before, and then up a short flight of stairs to a landing with two doors. The nearer of these the maid opened, and with the announcement: "The doctor, if you please, Miss Rose," stood back to let the young doctor go in.

Althea Godfrey entered a small, cheerful-looking room, with a modern imitation of an oak wainscot running round it for a dado. It was furnished conventionally enough, and chairs and tables alike were covered with the miscellaneous odds and ends of a girl's pursuits—racquets, music, work-things, seemed to spread themselves everywhere in untidy confusion. There was a large fire in the grate, warm May afternoon as it was, and in a basket-chair, drawn as close to the fire as possible, was Rose Swinton, with a shawl over her shoulders.

She was wearing a cotton dress which, though tumbled, was quite as smartly made as the blue serge in which she had received Dr. Meredith, and her pretty brown hair showed signs of having been very recently

twisted afresh into its elaborate coils and curls. Her face was flushed with a very bright colour, and her blue eyes shone with a feverish light.

With the very first movement of the door she had hastily raised herself from a crouching position, and turned her face towards it. Her eyes were therefore full on Dr. Godfrey at her entrance.

A flush of amazed incomprehension shot into them; Althea saw that. And she saw something more; something more was very visible in Rose Swinton's eyes, and that something was keen disappointment.

"I don't understand," she said hesitatingly and almost curtly. "Is Dr. Meredith away?"

"I am Dr. Meredith's assistant, and I have come in his place."

Althea Godfrey spoke with a chilling precision which seemed to create then and there an atmosphere of antagonism between herself and the girl before her. But Rose Swinton seemed not to be aware of it. She stared steadily at Dr. Meredith's assistant, which occupation absorbed her for several seconds.

"Won't you sit down?" she said suddenly. "Take that chair."

"That chair" was a chair opposite to Rose Swinton, on the other side of the hearthrug. Althea obeyed mechanically, and a moment later the doctor and patient were face to face.

Althea Godfrey told herself that it was her professional duty to check off, one by one, the details of Rose Swinton's appearance.

Rose Swinton, meanwhile, seemed to find her curiosity heightened by proximity, and calmly concluded her survey of the young doctor.

Complete as the process was in each case, it was, however, only momentary. Scarcely three seconds had really elapsed before Rose Swinton spoke.

"Is Dr. Meredith so very busy, then?" she said.

She had not known that the disappointment had been visible in her eyes. Still less did she know that her voice was instinct with it, in too strong a measure to let it be mistaken for a moment by the other for the petulance of ill-health.

Althea's professional inspection had left traces on her face. Her expression had become very set, and that antagonism seemed to pervade every feature. Her voice was even more chillingly measured than before as she said with apparently unnecessary emphasis:

"Very busy? Oh, no, not specially so." "Oh!"

The interjection contained a variety of emotions, in which, perhaps, a decidedly mortified vanity was the strongest. Althea scrutinised her patient calmly and mercilessly with a covert gleam in her eyes, while Rose Swinton dragged her thick shawl more closely round her with an irritated gesture.

The movement, slight as it was, served to awake in Althea her professional instincts.

"Miss Swinton," she said coldly and firmly, "I think we had better come to the point. May I ask you to tell me what is wrong with you?"

The curt professional tone was not without effect on Rose Swinton. She pulled herself languidly up in her chair, and looked at the young doctor with a half-concealed deference.

"I'm sure I can't think," she began in an aggrieved tone. "It was father who wrote to Dr. Meredith. He's out now," added Mr. Swinton's daughter parenthetically. "I've caught a cold, I think."

"Can you account for it in any way?"

"No. Unless it was Thursday afternoon."

"You were out in the rain?"

"I had some people to tennis; it pelted—you know how it pelted on Thursday; and Bob Wallis—do you know the Wallises? They are at Ringways—Bob Wallis is rather a good sort."

"No."

The monosyllable was very curt and clear.

"Well, he proposed that we should play just the same, for a lark, you know; and it really was a most awful lark. We were drenched."

"Ah!" Althea's eyebrows were raised sharply as she spoke, and her grey eyes beneath them were full of sarcasm. "I only hope, Miss Swinton, that the enjoyment you derived at the time may prove a compensation to you, for I do not think you will find the result give you much pleasure."

Althea's curt tone grew even more curt as she put to her patient a few searching technical questions.

"Can't you do anything?" said the girl fretfully, when the questions were ended. "It's simply hateful to feel so seedy. I'm never seedy. And I must be all right to-morrow; I'm going over to the Wallis's to lunch for a return match, and father wants me to take the choir practice in the evening, too."

"You will not think of going out until

I give you leave. I will send you something directly I get back. And Dr. Meredith or I will see you to-morrow."

Althea made a movement as if she meant to rise from her chair; but Rose Swinton, who had been looking sullenly into the fire during the curtly-expressed commands, turned her head sharply at the mention of Dr. Meredith's name, and Althea, scarcely knowing exactly why she did so, established herself again in it.

"You said Dr. Meredith was not very busy just now?"

"I did."

The answer was not an encouragement to pursue the subject, but Rose Swinton apparently ignored that circumstance.

"He has you to help him," she remarked. "How long have you been here, Dr. — I did not catch your name!" she added indifferently.

"My name is Godfrey."

Althea had grown accustomed in the past four weeks to this half statement, and had made it quite calmly innumerable times. But at this moment she spoke the short syllables with an intense aggressiveness.

"I have been in Mary Combe four weeks," she added.

"Have you?" Rose Swinton's tone was dry. She could not have explained the burning desire she suddenly felt to be disagreeable to Dr. Meredith's assistant. She "hated him" she said to herself. "A perfectly hateful young man" was the designation she had given Althea in her own mind.

"I wonder I have not heard Dr. Meredith speak of you," she continued.

"Have you seen Dr. Meredith since my arrival, then?"

The question was very blandly asked; and the snappish tone of Rose Swinton's "No, I have not," was oddly incongruous.

There was a moment's pause, and the two pair of eyes each stared into the glowing fire.

They formed, indeed, a curious contrast, as did the faces to which they belonged.

In Althea Godfrey's, every feature was set and fixed. In Rose Swinton's waves of angry, uncontrolled irritation swept visibly over the mobile, girlish face.

"You are a friend of Dr. Meredith's, I suppose?"

"Have you any one to look after you?"

The two questions broke the pause simultaneously. A significant testimony as to which was the stronger of the two individualities was given by the fact that Rose Swinton, after a moment's hesitation, did not repeat her decidedly inquisitive question, but answered the other with a certain sullen meekness.

"To take care of me!" she said. "Yes, of course, Emily looks after me. She showed you in. She has been here since I was a child. Didn't you know that I am alone here with father?" she added, in an aggrieved tone which arose from the reflection that she had certainly not been much discussed with the young doctor. "But I don't want taking care of!" she said angrily. "I tell you I shall be all right to-morrow!"

"That remains to be seen," said Althea composedly, rising meanwhile decidedly from her chair. "Good afternoon," she continued, with cold suavity.

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CHAPTER XXXIX. TROUBLED THOUGHTS.

WHEN she knocked at her father's door, Penelope listened anxiously for his answer. Often, when he spent the night at the farm, he would come home early to the Palace, and busy himself in this solitary turret. No servants were allowed to come here, only Oldcorn managed at times to tidy up the few things in the room, or to renew the woodstack piled up under the winding stairs. Very occasionally, too, Penelope was allowed to enter, but it was not often that she cared to penetrate the cheerless abode.

The room itself was octagon in shape, and contained a door leading out into a small shabby, and another door opening into a very dark, damp passage. Across this passage and some yards lower down was the partition door, and this could be, and generally was, locked from the inside.

After waiting some time Penelope was about to turn away, when she heard her father's stick and his lame shuffle along the passage floor. Presently he called out:

"What do you want?"

"It's me—Penelope. Open, please. I must see you, I must speak to you."

The King slowly drew back the bolt and Penelope followed him to the desolate room, which was known as his bedroom. A fire had been lately lighted on the hearth, and the flames shed some little comfort on the damp, dreary walls.

"Well, what do you want now?" said

the old man, peering at her from under his shaggy brows.

Penelope raised her head.

"I have come to tell you that I have found your treasure, and that there must be an end of all this secrecy."

"Eh! You—the girl blabbed, then, did she?"

"No, she was so much excited that she walked there in her sleep, and I met her."

"It's mine," said the King angrily. "It's no business of yours—I won't have Greybarrow meddling with it. You didn't believe me. Ah! Well, it was your great-aunt that hid it. The story always went that she had done it, and that she would walk till it was discovered. Tell me, did you hear her footsteps just now?"

"But you knew it before, and you let me marry—for money," said Penelope, not hiding her indignation, and not answering the King's last remark.

"You and Greybarrow never consulted me, so you were caught in your own nets. What is it to me?"

He laughed till Penelope felt all the anger of which she was capable rising in her heart. Her father had let her sacrifice herself when he might have saved her.

"You don't care for anything; you don't care for me at all, so that you scrape up your vile gold," she said passionately.

"That's a lie! I care more than you do for the honour of the house. You sold the honour for gold. Your great-aunt wouldn't have done it."

"We must give that money back to Philip Gillbanks. He is here, he has come back," said Penelope slowly and firmly.

There was as much obstinacy in the character of the daughter as there was in that of the father. The old man, who had been crouching over the fire, looked up quickly,

and the Princess knew that she had at last touched a chord which could vibrate. Her own happiness or sorrow did not move him in the least.

"Give back the money which is mine! Good Heaven! Penelope, are you mad!"

"No—listen, father. That money must be returned. I don't know how much it is, or how much Philip has spent on these repairs. It is a large sum, I know, but he must have every penny given back to him, because I—I shall prove to him that I was forced to marry him, and that when the debt is paid I shall leave him. Do you hear? Every penny must be returned."

"Good Heaven! Penelope, you're mad, mad!" he repeated in an excited tone. "You married to please Greybarrow and yourself. I never asked you to do it. As to giving the Winskell money to that upstart, I won't do it."

Suddenly such a gleam of mad cunning came into his eyes as made Penelope shudder, accustomed as she was to his strange ways.

"Listen, Penzie, listen, girl. You've made a mistake. You love the other one. No Winskell could marry a tradesman. Curse him! Get rid of him, girl, and then——"

"When every penny is returned, then I will see what I can do, but till then——"

"Don't think it possible. Besides, how much is it? Oh, it's no use talking about that. I mustn't let the tenants know we are rich. It's bad enough as it is."

"I will have that money restored, father," she said, speaking slowly. "Don't you think that now, at last, I have a will as strong as yours? Don't you see that the law will make you return Philip's money if I choose to appeal to it?"

"The law! Hush, girl, keep away from the lawyers. Very devils they are, all of them. Keep away from them. Trust me. I'll see you are out of this scrape. But the gold, I can't give him that. There are other ways, other ways, child."

"There is no other way; I shall come here to-morrow evening and get your answer."

"Not here, Penzie, come to the farm. I hate this old place now you have spoilt it so much. Greybarrow is a fool. Penelope, don't tell him about the money. You shall be righted, girl, never fear; I'll do it. You don't believe in me, but that's Greybarrow's fault; he never believed in me. Oh! but who found the gold? He didn't. I believed the old legend; he didn't. I knew the Winskells never did

anything without a purpose. That great-aunt of yours buried her money when her husband died. She did not want her second choice to enjoy it. She outwitted them all. Come, girl, don't tell any one, and you'll be safe."

He had now relapsed into mutterings which Penelope hardly heeded. She turned away repeating once more:

"I shall come for your answer, father, to-morrow evening. If every penny is not returned to Philip Gillbanks, then I will find a way of forcing you to restore it."

When Penelope's pride was aroused, it was a terribly strong incentive to achievement. If she decided that something must be done, the old spirit of resistance till death was awakened within her and proved all-powerful.

So at least she thought as she moved away; but then she under-rated the power of the half-crazy man who was her father, and who in his own mind was still the true King of Rothery.

Penelope now hurried away to see after Dora, whom she found still in bed, certainly better, though she was very pale, and had a strange, dull look in her eyes.

"You are better, dear; I am glad." Penelope had hidden all her strong excitement, and now spoke gently and kindly as she stooped down to kiss the young girl whose secret she had stolen.

"Yes, I feel tired and stupid, but Betty has been very kind to me. Forster has been to see me, and he is very anxious to go away to-day. I must get up."

"You must be patient a little while longer, Dora."

"Penelope, I have been wanting to see you. I want to ask you about it—about last night."

"It is better that you should forget it all, dear; don't talk about it."

"But I must. Oh, Princess! I feel so wicked."

"You, my poor Dora, what a ridiculous idea! You wicked! That is impossible."

"Yes; I have broken my most solemn promise. Indeed, I meant to keep your father's secret, but—but—I could not help it. Only, Princess, why did you follow me? Why didn't you lead me back before I reached the spot? You helped me to break my word."

Penelope blushed. The child's pure instincts contrasted vividly with her baser thoughts, and shamed her.

"Dora, my father had no right to make you give him such a promise. You can't

understand it, but he was wrong, and it is quite right that I should know. I must undo the evil that the secret has already brought about."

"I don't know, of course; and I don't understand; but I am sure it is wrong to break my word. I shall be so very unhappy about it, Princess, till—till—I tell your father."

"I have told him."

"What did he say? He will never trust me again. Oh! I am afraid to meet him."

Dora was strangely excited. Her nerves had been terribly shaken the night before.

"Foolish child, don't think any more about it. Try to sleep. It is a beautiful day, and perhaps in the afternoon we could take a walk together."

"I know Forster wants me to go away. I ought to try to get up."

"No, no, dear child, indeed you must not do so. Kiss me, Dora, and forgive me." Something prevented her mentioning Philip's arrival to this child.

Dora kissed her, but she added:

"If I could only explain it to the King!"

Penelope had still much to do before she could carry out her plan. She must have a talk with her uncle, and that seemed the most difficult undertaking of all. Besides, she did not know what decision Forster would make. Their last interview had been interrupted by Philip, but they did not need words to tell each other the truth. There was no use in concealing it any longer. She could not help what had already taken place. She had been cruelly kept in ignorance by her father, and deceived by her uncle. It was cruel and wrong, and she was left alone by them to bear the burden of it. Forster was so good, so noble, he understood; he alone could understand.

She hurried on to find the Duke. Since he had handled so much money, he was now seldom in his study, which was improved past recognition. Penelope looked in, but he was not there. Her eyes fell on the low chair on which she had so often sat, listening to her uncle's projects. How easily then she had agreed with them, how little she had foreseen her punishment!

All at once the past seemed to become clear to her. She saw her uncle, always striving to keep up the faded glories, and heard him telling her that she alone could raise the fallen fortunes; she saw him making plans for the time when ruin should

face them. She heard once more his encouraging words; she saw his patience, his gentleness, his love.

No, she could not now go and reproach him! She would bear the reproach alone. No one should know it, no one but the two who were bound to know it. They must be told, and that soon.

At this moment her uncle entered the room with a look of proud contentment on his face. A few moments before Penelope had meant to tell him everything, now she paused, and the words died on her lips. He had done so much for her all her life long; could she not at least leave him the happiness of ignorance?

"Penelope! Oh! there you are. I wanted to see you. This unexpected arrival of Philip has changed all our plans. I have been talking to him, and he thinks that, if it were not for your father, it would be best for you—for us all to migrate to London for the winter."

"We cannot leave my father," said Penelope quickly. "No, no, we could not."

"No, of course not—I am really anxious about him, and lately he seems to me to have been more strange, more——"

"Uncle, I must tell you. You did not know it, did you?"

"Know what?"

"That after all the tradition was true. The King has found it."

"Found it? Don't speak in riddles, child."

"Riddles! Oh, uncle, it is true, true, and—our plans need never have been made. My father has found the treasure."

The Duke stood quite still for a few moments, and his face turned a little pale.

"Nonsense! You are dreaming."

"Yes, it does seem like a dream, but it is true, and you know he is in no fit state to deal with it. You must get hold of it."

The Duke walked up and down the room for a little while in silence. Evidently the news was quite unexpected. Penelope was glad to see the intense surprise expressed on her uncle's face. He at least had not deceived her.

"Tell me how you know, child. It seems incredible."

Penelope quickly repeated the bare outline of the facts, then she added:

"We must return Philip's money."

"Return Philip's money! Why! Impossible."

"We took it under false pretences."

"Nothing of the sort. Philip, I am

sure, would not hear of it; besides, if your father has it, it is quite another thing getting hold of it. But really, who would have believed the old tradition was true after all?"

"This money is a hateful thing. I—I hate it."

The Duke smiled.

"You are tired and overdone, Penzie. When you are my age you will think poverty a far worse trial than riches. Take my word for it. The next thing is to show me the spot."

Penelope sighed. She felt herself shrink from the hateful gold. She did not wish ever to see it again.

"I will show you the place, and then——"

"Then I will see about getting hold of it. Really your father is not altogether accountable for his actions, he might have died without telling us the secret. It is most extraordinary."

The Duke began pacing the room. He felt more annoyed than he could show, because there were certain transactions which he remembered, and which he would be glad to think had never taken place. Even Philip was a fact he could have dispensed with, but then Philip was a fact, and as such must be accepted. After all the money might not be worth much. The King, however, was a very good judge, and Penelope had seen it. Yes, the luck had certainly turned, he thought, and the house of Rothery would one day be as rich and as famous as it deserved to be.

CHAPTER XL. SEEN THROUGH THE FOG.

It was to be an eventful day for several persons at the Palace. The afternoon was cold and dull, and a slight fog rose along the valley like a white veil lifted up a few yards from the earth. The autumn tints appeared to flush into existence, painted by an unseen artist. A slow drip, drip, came from the trees, but at present not one moan from the wind. A bird now and again chirped in a sad note, and the cattle grazed on unheeding, intent only on getting as much food as possible. In the Palace itself there was a strange stillness, as if some enchantment had fallen upon the place, or as if a doom were about to be accomplished. Nature has its moments of mystery, just as the human soul experiences its times of unreasoning horror.

All the bright joyousness of the first days of Forster's visit seemed to have fled away.

Forster himself was walking in a great shadow. It had folded him in its cold grasp, and he was struggling to get out of it into the pure sunshine. He had meant to leave the Palace to-day—indeed, it was now his greatest wish to flee from the place that had brought him so near to the shadow of spiritual death—but Dora's sudden indisposition had prevented this, and he was at this moment meditating whether he could leave her here alone. That, however, seemed impossible. His mother would not like it, and besides, it would look strange to leave Philip the first day of his arrival.

It seemed to Forster that as he gazed out, there was a red streak across the low-lying fog, something which dimmed his own sight. The air was oppressive; he could not breathe; he felt as if the world were too small for him. Where was his ideal? Where his great love of humanity? It had all fled. He seemed to care now for nothing, realising only three persons in the world—he himself and the wife that was no wife, and the friend whom in thought he had betrayed. Forster had now no more false colours wherewith to paint his deeds.

Which way should he walk? What should he do? Man is weak, and easily led when passion has taken possession of him, and the higher the nature, the greater the battle. Still, the fortress built on a rock must be undermined before it can fall.

Suddenly the two friends found themselves together. Philip had been round the place to see several improvements which the Duke had begged him at once to inspect. He heard that Penelope was with Dora, so he grudging the interruption less. His heart was still trusting in the work of time; he would not be hopeless, for depression is the devil's friend. Hurrying round again to the front door he met Forster on the point of starting out.

"Has Penelope come down?" he asked, and the tone of his voice struck a chill into Forster's heart. "And where are you going?"

"No, I do not think she has returned, at least I have not seen her. I was going down to the lake to see after some tackle I left there; I want to pack it up."

"Can't Jim Oldcorn see about it for you? Or, better still, let us go down there together. It's so strange being here again that I cannot realise it yet; I can't realise my own identity. Do you know the feeling?"

"Yes—besides, it's a beastly day. But

why should you come? You have so much to do and to see here now."

Philip turned and led the way down the drive, taking the path towards the lake.

"No. The Duke is very kind, very, he always has been, but—well, you see, Forster, with the King I am still a stranger and a foreigner. One could not foresee everything, or indeed the ways and doings of such a man. He is crazy, I believe."

"No doubt of it, both bad and mad."

"I would not say this to any one but you, Forster, but you tried to—to warn me that there would be difficulties in such a position as mine, and I was deaf and blind. A man sees things more plainly after a time. But I don't want to complain, even to you, about the King; he is Penelope's father."

Forster walked on by Philip's side like a man in a dream.

"Of course; but really he is not an ordinary mortal. He frightened Dora out of her wits, poor child. I want to take her home. But you have not yet seen him, have you?"

"Yes, just now, when I was prowling round the place. The Duke was anxious I should inspect the new stables—we met face to face."

Forster did not dare to look up at Philip.

"Ah! What did he say?"

"One can't repeat the ravings of a lunatic," said Philip, walking on rather fast, "and his extravagance refutes itself; but I wish some one had influence over him. Jim Oldcorn is a most faithful follower, but unfortunately he is a mere slave to his master's wishes."

"Yes, a mere slave."

"Then, you see, I am not really master here in any sense of the word. Why, that eastern turret has not been touched or repaired because the King burrows there. It is barely safe, but he would not hear of having it touched."

"Foolish old man!"

"Yet the King is sharp enough in some ways. Well, heigh ho! Here is the short cut to the water. Is the boat in good condition? I used to dream of this lake out in Africa."

Forster mentally heard the unspoken words, "and of Penelope." A poisoned arrow seemed to pierce him.

"I wanted to go home to-day, but Dora can't travel," he said.

His words seemed to be jerked out, and the former perfectly open intercourse between them appeared dead. Did Philip

feel it, or was it only his own heart that sang the dirge of the old friendship?

"Stay a little while longer with us," said Philip, pausing suddenly, as if the simple remark had an underlying significance. "A few days will not hurt your people. Forster, I want your help, your—company. We must make the Palace more cheerful, or that old man will bring the blue devils about the place."

"But I must go as soon as possible."

"I owe so much to you, Forster; all my wider views of life, all the best that is in me——"

Philip talked dreamily. He seated himself in the boat and looked straight before him, as if he were answering some one else who had accused his friend. Then he motioned Forster to come and sit beside him, and, the chain guarding the boathouse entrance being unloosed, in a few moments the boat shot out silently upon the misty water. All the beautiful views were blotted out, only the near banks were visible, traced out in blurred outline. A wild water-fowl now and then skimmed the water, breaking the strange silence that surrounded them. Forster dreamily settled himself in the boat; in their present position the friends were face to face. Philip fixed his eyes on Forster, but the latter only glanced at the still, grey water. He wondered why he had entered the boat, for he had not meant to do it, nor had he wished it. Philip's presence took away the power of thought. He was only conscious of the great gulf now lying between them, and, moreover, while he felt that he must do or say something, both his limbs and his tongue seemed tied and bound. Why had this thing happened? Forster groaned inwardly, but even to himself he could not say, "I will give her up." On the contrary, he thought: "It will be kinder, better for both to be true. What can she do? But why did I ever come here? I might have killed the love if I had never seen her again."

Philip was only playing with the oars, and did not go far from the banks. His mind seemed far away, as if he hardly knew where he was, or what he was doing. Suddenly he paused and shipped the oars.

"Forster, old fellow, look here. You know that out there we had a difference, our first, our only one. Have you forgiven me? Do you understand that there are times in a man's life when silence is his best advocate? You know that it was not from want of

love or trust in you that I could not give in?"

"I know."

"It seemed to me to-day almost as if you still bore me a grudge—no, not that—but as if there were still a barrier between us. I could not bear that. You have so long been my leader, and a leader cannot turn against his disciple."

He laughed to hide his earnestness.

"Against you, Philip; who could?"

"No, I do not mean that exactly, but you thought me mistaken. You were right, oh, quite right, and I was a blind idiot, but then—once in the——"

He stopped, apparently unable to say more, and yet his eyes still appealed to his friend for sympathy.

Forster could not look up, but he echoed the laugh as he answered:

"You must not take a gloomy view of life."

"That's what I say to myself, and I have fought against despondency. Do you remember how, when we watched the struggles of some of our lads, we used to say that the spirit of evil was no myth? I did not guess then I should find out the truth of that by experience."

"You, Philip! No, no, any fight you have must be against a weaker foe than your own conscience."

"One doesn't really know oneself, much less other people. Even this morning, when I was full of hope, that old man, that poor demented being, called up the spirit of despair."

Forster's hand trembled.

"What did he say?"

"He—he—Forster, I should never be a diplomatist. He accused you of—of—but I gave him the lie direct."

"What did he say?" repeated Forster, summoning every spark of strength he possessed.

"I will not hurt your ears nor my lips by repeating it. I really think the man is possessed."

Philip seized the oars and swung the head of the boat homewards. The splash of the keel and the dip of the oars were alone audible in the great field of stillness. Forster was silent—what could he say? His lips tried to form some sentence meant to show Philip the hopelessness of the situation. Almost he resolved to tell him all, and then—but no, no, for Penelope's sake he could not.

Once again they entered the boathouse, and Philip spoke:

"We came for your fishing-tackle, and I was insane enough to forget all about it. Here it is."

He secured the boat, and hauled down Forster's rod from a shelf. As the two stepped out, Philip once more turned to his friend.

"Have I been an ass to mention such foolish things? Are you hurt, Forster? I'm ashamed of myself, but I think that out there one gets more excitable than in the old country. When you left me I really worked myself into a fever."

"You are the hero, Philip. You stayed, you never forsook your post."

Forster spoke in a low voice—a voice full of despair, had his companion been able to interpret its tone.

"What nonsense! You certainly did not go till the doctor drove you away. Forget all I've said. I've been an awful fool, but the King has still a strange power about him. He hates strangers, and wishes me at the bottom of the lake."

"He can't get over his son's death."

"Yes, I know that's it. I said that to myself all the while he was telling his abominable stories. If he were not an old man, and Penelope's father, I would have knocked him down; as it was, I spoke plainly."

Philip's speech stung Forster to the quick. He did not know why these special words should rend the veil, but suddenly he was humbled to the dust. Still his lips were closed, and still the storm raged within him. Duty and passion can fight hard, but which path was he to follow now that he had got thus far? Should he go back or should he proceed?

Suddenly Philip laughed.

"Talking of all this rubbish I have left your rod behind! Don't wait for me, I'll run back for it."

Philip was gone before Forster could frame his next sentence, before he could decide what it should be. Still in a dream he walked on towards the Palace. The grey mist was lifting; all the leaves glistened with moisture and suspended raindrops. A very faint pale apricot streak broke through the grey sky, expanding into a long, indistinct line, and considerably relieving nature's look of utter dejection.

Forster had just reached the front door when he saw Penelope herself standing at the top of the steps. She had put on a long cloak and a great shady hat, and, standing thus, she looked like a Gainsborough picture, for there was a flush on

her cheek. To Forster she seemed like a princess born, such a princess as a young child dreams of when it reads enchanting fairy tales. Forster had no time to think. He knew that very soon the spell would fall upon him again if he did not at once begin the fight.

"Come," said Penelope, "come at once, I have been waiting for you. Will you walk up the glen with me? I must speak to you."

There was no haughtiness now about her, she was evidently thinking only of one idea. Without another word she ran down the steps and led the way till they reached the gloom of the glen, where all the misty clouds seemed to wrap them round very close. There are some moments in life when men and women feel that they are, as it were, making history, the history of one life which—in a miniature way it may be—is as important as the history of a nation. There need not be, and with great natures there seldom is, any theatrical scene; voices need not be raised, and there are no stage effects; but, nevertheless, at some special moment two souls in converse know that, for good or for evil, they are engraving lasting records on the tablets of their hearts.

Forster followed because he knew he could not but follow. But as he followed, Philip's voice was still sounding in his ears, and Philip's eyes still looked into his.

They had reached the middle of the glen before he spoke, then suddenly he stopped and said:

"I can't go further, I must not. I—I—have much to do before leaving you."

"You must come to the gate. Out there, where one can see far away over the mountain, one can breathe more freely, and one can think better."

"No, I will not go further," said Forster. Penelope turned impatiently towards him.

"It does not matter. We are alone, and I must tell you. You have a right to know. I have told you what I suffered in my youth, how desolate and lonely I was; how my uncle alone made me what I became—not what I am. Then you know, too, the result of my training. I had no heart; I cared only for the honour of our house. It was a passion with me, you know it. You tried to show me my folly, but I did not see it then."

She was leaning against a tree, and at that moment Nero came silently bounding up to her, appearing suddenly out of the mist. He jumped upon her, and for a moment her hand rested upon his head.

Forster raised his head a little.

"It was the curse of your life—and of other lives."

"Anyhow, it was part of my life. Then our increasing poverty, and the heart-breaking fear of being swept away off the face of this land, which our ancestors had owned, that made my uncle act—as he did. I don't defend it now, but if he wanted another sacrifice from me I would make it again. Hard as it was—oh, very hard—I would not disappoint him."

"I know. Why do you repeat it?"

"But now it is altered, everything is changed. My father has found the treasure. It is true, true. Even uncle is convinced. There was a tradition of a hoard made by my great-aunt, and no one believed it but the King. He has found it, and we are free."

"Free?"

"Yes—Forster, don't you understand? This life of mine, this sham marriage, is over—it is over. We can pay back everything to Philip, to the uttermost farthing."

"Pay back to Philip?"

"Yes, and then—then I am free. Oh, the weight of the chain was too heavy. You know it."

"Free from Philip?" said Forster, as if he were speaking in a dream.

"Yes, we can pay him back. I was bound by that hateful money, bound, you know it. Oh, Forster, you have taught me that there is something better than family honour."

"You can pay back Philip, but the law, the world—have you considered?"

"Everything, and I do not care; I do not blame him, though he should not have married me without love. I did not deceive him. He thought it would come right—but, oh, I want to be free, because—I am very humble now, you know, because you have taught me what love is."

She was close to him now, and he took her hands in his.

"You have taught me what love is," he repeated in a low voice, "but, Penelope, there is a higher duty. I have been fighting the hardest battle a man can fight."

"I know what you would say," she interrupted him hurriedly, "but it is not true; Philip cannot, will not bind me. He shall not."

"Not Philip, but God."

"What is the use?" she went on. "You and I were mistaken, now I see it all; I was not alive then in those days, I did not

understand, I allowed my uncle to lead me, but now all is different."

"It is, I know, but, Penelope—hush—you—because—because I love you—that—"

Penelope gave a little low cry as she laid her head against him.

"Because you love me it will all be easy."

Down the side of the woody slope Philip had been coming, and at this moment he stood beside them. His eyes gazed at them as one gazes at some terrible phenomenon, and then the mist that had hidden him a moment before, closed round him again, and he was gone. He had said nothing, but he had given one look, not of anger, but of despair, a look which, as it happened, both saw, for they had started apart.

Then they were alone again, and Forster cried out in the bitterness of his soul :

"Penelope, because I love you, and because I love him, I cannot, I cannot do this thing. My sin is too heavy, I must go to him. Oh, my darling, he is more noble than I am."

Penelope looked into Forster's face, and that look told her what human suffering means : she understood that no sorrow is equal to the sorrow a man feels for his own lost honour.

In another instant he was gone, and the grey fog wrapped him around and hid him also from her sight. Penelope sat down on the wet bank and stared blankly at the fog.

After a time the last of the line of Rothery stood up and tried to walk a few steps towards home. Then suddenly the grey cloud about her seemed to be lifted, and swirled violently about her. Some invisible agents lashed the grey curling wreaths into thin whip-cords of stinging power, entangling her in their meshes, strangling her and choking her, till she threw out her arms for protection.

"What have I done?" she said, unconscious that she was alone. "What have I done?"

Then with a cry such as she had never before uttered, Penelope Winkell fell heavily to the ground, and Nero, coming close up to her, slowly licked her bare, motionless hands.

CHILDREN.

"CHILDREN," said the psalmist, "are an heritage of the Lord." We do not seem, some of us, to think so now. Many

men's, and many women's, hands seem to be against the children. Legislation is needed to protect them, just as legislation is needed to save from destruction fish, and birds, and beasts. They are bracketed with the animals—we have societies for the prevention of cruelty to both. Some of the nations, as nations, are using natural and unnatural means to restrict, within as scanty limits as possible, the entrance of the children into the world. And now certain of our women are exclaiming against the shame and the ignominy of maternity. They are telling us that it is not the birth-right, it is the birthwrong of women that they should have to bear children.

As a matter of plain fact, if children are an heritage of the Lord, they are a heritage which, not seldom, seems to come too soon. When the lord of the broad acres marries the lady of high degree, probably the desire for an heir is one of the chief causes of the union; and when the heir does come the father and the mother rejoice for that a son is born unto them. But when the ambitious young Jones marries the affectionate Miss Smith, their desire is rather for companionship, that each should be a stay unto the other. So long as they have each other's society they are content. But when the coming event casts its shadows before, and the advent of a baby begins to loom upon the household, there is apt to come that rift within the lute which tends, if not to make the music altogether mute, at least to introduce into the harmony a discord. Let the sentimentalists say what they will, a baby is not an unmitigated blessing. In the case of the man with ten, or twenty, or thirty thousand pounds a year, the disadvantages connected with the appearance of the infantile stranger are reduced to a minimum. In the case of the poor man they too often obscure the whole horizon. And when the one is followed by others, complications frequently ensue, which embitter the whole lives of the man and woman, who, if there had been no children, would have been happy together to the end.

It is curious to observe how, in many households, the appearance of children is productive of disputes. There is greater difference of opinion between parents on the question of the management of their children than may be commonly supposed. The subject bristles with delicate points. Many a man, for instance, is jealous of his own child. Nor is his jealousy necessarily so absurd as might, at first sight, appear. Take the case

of Potter. Potter adores his wife. His wife used to adore him. Until the baby came he was everything to her. Now, Potter declares, he is nothing at all in his own home. The home is that baby's, not his. The baby's hours of sleeping must be respected, and the baby's hours of waking. When the baby is asleep, Potter is not expected to speak above a whisper; and when the baby is awake, he is required to exercise what his wife calls "patience." Potter's explanation of what his wife understands as "patience" is occasionally a little lurid. The other day dinner was half an hour late, owing to the baby having been "fractious." Just as the famishing Potter had served the soup, the baby woke up. Mrs. Potter could not sit still and hear that poor child cry. She was sure that nurse was shaking it. Would Potter let it come down? Potter declined; so his wife went up to see what was the matter with the child. When he had finished his soup he sent up to ask when she was coming back. She sent down a message to say that Mr. Potter must have a little patience. When, in solitary state, he had eaten his fish, he went up to enquire into the affair upon his own account. His enquiries took a form which induced his wife to return with him to table. Having returned, she read him a lecture on his want of patience, which, according to Potter, ended in something very like assault and battery. In consequence, husband and wife scarcely spoke to each other for a week. The happiness of Potter's household threatens to be poisoned by the baby.

The Jenkinsons have differed on a matter concerning the management of their baby, and although the quarrel seems farcical, yet there have been moments when it has approached to tragedy. Jenkinson has a theory that it not only does not do a baby harm to cry, but that it does it positive good—strengthens its lungs, he says. Mrs. Jenkinson differs in opinion from him entirely. In her judgement, as a mother, it is clear to her that to permit a helpless mite to cry, and to keep on crying without attempting to do anything to dry its tears, is to be guilty of conduct deserving the strongest reprobation. Owing to the divergence of opinion which exists between the couple upon this subject, the Jenkinsons have been more than once, and more than twice, on the verge of a judicial separation. Jenkinson says that in a "crèche," and in institutions of that kind, it is the custom when a baby wants to cry to let it. In conse-

quence, Jenkinson has issued instructions at divers times to the effect that when the baby, as he puts it, "starts to howl," it is to be allowed to "howl itself out." The result, when the baby does "start to howl," may be better imagined than described. Although Jenkinson may go too far in one direction, Mrs. Jenkinson really does go too far in another. It does not always do a baby harm to cry, and it is not always advisable when it does cry to humour it, and to cuddle it, and to make a fuss of it. So managed, a baby may soon become an unqualified nuisance. Indeed, the Jenkinsons' baby has not only become a nuisance to itself and to all connected with it, but it has actually caused each of its parents to be an affliction to the other.

Bachelors' wives and old maids' children are always paragons. I remember that, when I was a youngster, my children, which were then such a long way off, were truly remarkable examples of their species. I was quite clear in my own mind that they should not be compelled to do this, that, and the other, as I was. They should be free as the air, unshackled as the wind. They should not be trammelled by a thousand and one parental whims. They should not be kept off the water for fear of getting drowned, nor from climbing trees lest they should break legs, and arms, and such like trivialities. They should be constrained by no antiquated notions as to what constituted cleanliness, and from all pettifogging worries concerning the not tearing their clothes, and not kicking the toes off their boots, their young minds should be free. When they wished to work, they should work, and only then.

Those days are some time since. My children are not at all what I intended them to be. I do not know why; it is so. More, my point of view has performed a volte face. In those days my attention was principally, if not solely, directed towards the duties which parents owed their children. I felt that, by parents, they were underrated, misunderstood. Now, once in a way, I think of the duty which children owe their parents, and I wonder.

The strangest part of the business is that my ideas on the management and the training of children, so far from becoming clearer and clearer, have become more and more confused. I am conscious that they are not so clear now as they were all those years ago. Above all, I have become conscious that there are two sides of the question, the parent's and the child's. It

is a hard question which I have sometimes to ask myself—which of the two shall give way?

Under the conditions which obtain in England, this question—which must, at some time or other, force itself upon every father and upon every mother—of the parent against the child, is a peculiarly complicated one. They order this matter differently in France. Beyond doubt, French parents exercise more self-denial for the sake of their children than is the case in England. There the thing is universal; here the thing is exceptional. A French father considers himself shamed if he is not able to give his daughter a "dot"; that is, in a pecuniary sense, to secure her future in life. The peasant strains every nerve to do this, and the artisan, the tradesman, the professional man, as well as the millionaire. The large majority of French parents, as they call it, "make little economies," that is, live in comparative or in actual penury, in order that they may add franc to franc for the purpose of providing their daughter with a marriage portion. More, should they have a son as well as a daughter, they will draw their purse-strings, so far as they are themselves concerned, tighter still, and deny themselves even the smallest gratification, in the hope of being able to make the way smooth for him at starting. It is to be noted also, that in France, with parents and children, all things are in common. Seldom does a Gallic father treat himself to any indulgence which he does not share with his children, even with his babies.

It is not like that in England. Rare, indeed, is the English girl who goes with a dowry to her husband. The average father, when he has paid for her wedding and her trousseau, and a present or two, considers that he has done his duty towards her handsomely. Many a girl of decent family has to make a diplomatic appeal to her, more or less, distant relatives to help her with her trousseau. Many such an one, in fact, has to go to her husband with practically no trousseau at all. Men with six, and seven, and eight hundred a year, ay, and with twice and thrice as much, are not ashamed to tell the suitors who come wooing for their daughters, that they cannot afford to give anything with them. They consider that they have done all which can reasonably be expected of them when they insure their own lives.

If this thing were baldly stated and left there, it would seem as if parents in England

were greater sinners than they actually are. There is something to be added, and that something goes no slight distance towards explaining the difference which exists in the national procedure. In France the children are bound; in England they are free—there is the gist of it. Across the Channel, marriage is purposely made as difficult of attainment as possible. No end of forms and formulas have to be gone through before the knot can be tied. The end and aim of the law is to safeguard the parent; to rivet, tighter and tighter, the bonds within which he confines his child. A child can do nothing of his or her own volition till he or she is married; and marriage is only to be achieved by precise obedience to parental wishes.

In England it is all the other way. The tendency of our legislation is towards, not only the freedom, but it would really seem also the license of the child. What hold does the law in England give a parent over his offspring? He is compelled to keep them, he cannot compel their obedience in return. Under what, not seldom, are circumstances of great hardship, he can be compelled to pay their debts; he finds himself hard put to it when he endeavours to compel them not to incur them. He can choose for them a trade or a profession; he can do nothing to compel them to embrace it. And though they do all the things which he had rather they left undone, the law will not aid him in one jot or one tittle in his endeavours to turn them from what he deems to be the error of their ways. As for marriage, is it not notorious that any one can marry any one else within twenty-four hours for something over a couple of guineas, and within three weeks—if poverty of pence compels them to wait so long—for something under half-a-sovereign? Are not our children availing themselves more and more of the opportunities offered by a convenient registrar? Unless one has witnessed such a ceremony at a registrar's, one can have no notion of how quickly one can get married. No questions are asked, you pay your money, and there you are! What is the use of our forbidding Harriet to marry Muffson? She has only to step out one morning to post a letter, and to return in twenty minutes Mrs. Muffson. Better give the girl our consent and a square meal, so as to start her merrily on what we have every reason to believe will be her life of married misery.

It is this sense of insecurity which I fancy, has a good deal to do with the English

parental disregard for their children's future. How many couples, directly a child is born, put aside year after year, with religious persistence, a specified sum, with a view of accumulating a nest-egg, which shall be available for the little one when it shall have attained to riper years? I wonder! And, having wondered, I am inclined to ask why should they? Suppose, to take an illustration, a couple with one child to have five hundred a year. They feed and clothe the child, and give it a decent education, and so on, and then they spend what is left upon themselves. Why should they not? There is annually, let us say, when all the current necessary expenses have been met, a surplus sum which they devote to what may be called their own pleasures. Ought the child to come between them and their pleasures, and ought the sum which is spent on them to be set aside for the child? Why?

The thing ought to be made the subject of experiment. One would like to have, as an object lesson, six couples adopting one method and six couples adopting the other. Life is pretty hard. It is not often for most of us that relaxation comes to relieve the pressure. Are we deliberately to make up our minds to do without this occasional relaxation, and always to endure the continual pressure? If we do this, what will the child do for us? Remember that as a result, we shall be prematurely worn out and prematurely aged; what return may we expect from the one for whose sake we have incurred unnatural decrepitude?

The enquiry suggests many lines of speculation. To begin with, when are we going to present the child with the product of our accumulations? If it is a girl, upon her marriage? If so, who is to choose her husband, she or we? It must be borne in mind that in France the husband is invariably the parent's choice. How many girls are there in England who would permit their parents, on any terms, to choose for them their husbands—to say, peremptorily, this man you shall marry, that man you shall not?

Actually, it would be found that parents with us have very little to do with the choice of their daughters' husbands; if appearances are to be trusted they are likely to have still less. Young Muffson asks Harriet to marry him. If Harriet says yes—she will not hesitate to say yes or no, entirely on her own responsibility—there, in all probability, will be an end of it. The Greenings never in their wildest moments

contemplated such a husband for Harriet, when they began to accumulate for her that nest-egg. Their idea of a husband was something altogether different; not that there is anything against young Muffson, only that he is without prospects, and a fool. Are their hardly economised savings to go towards the establishment of young Muffson, whom they positively—and with good reason—dislike? The heavens forbid. Yet what are they to do? Harriet will marry Muffson; she reproaches them because they will not give her their blessing on the instant! It is too late for them to spend their savings upon themselves to any advantage, even if they wished to; their time for enjoyment of that sort has long since gone. What good have they done to themselves or to any one by depriving themselves of the pleasures of life when they hungered for them, and were capable of their appreciation?

Or, supposing the child to be a boy, is the matter bettered then? Hardly. Boys hold themselves entitled to a freer hand in the choice of their mates even than their sisters. They merely mention in the home circle the fact that they are going to marry in a casual sort of way—not infrequently they forget to mention it at all till the thing is done. I have a friend who has five boys. By dint of exercising considerable self-denial, he has placed himself in a position which will enable him to start them in life with five hundred pounds apiece. He feels, not unreasonably, that they ought to have some practical training in any career which they might choose, before being entrusted with ready money. The result of this feeling, so far, has been somewhat disastrous. Not one of the lads seems to have any idea of what he would like to be, though they all unite in disliking to be anything which their father may suggest. The eldest has already been knocked about from pillar to post in the City—he hates the City. Finally he elected to try South Africa. His father shipped him out at his request to Johannesburg. The young gentleman has been there something near a year. Not long since he wrote to say that he had married a young lady in a store, as they both felt that it would be more comfortable and cheaper to keep house for two than for one. Would his father send over his money? What is the father to do? He is inclined to think—at this time of day—that after all it is better for parents not to deny themselves for the sake of their children, but when their time comes, to let them go out

into the world, and to fend for themselves. He is beginning to suspect that just as it does boys good to have to rough it at boarding-school, so it does young men good to have to rough it in the school of life. He doubts, in short, if the latter ever come to much until they have spent the money with which their mistakenly affectionate parents at the outset lined their pockets.

He is a clear-headed, broad-minded man, and he speaks from experience. I am not sure that he is not right. I am not sure that the average British parent is not justified in thinking of himself first and of his children second; if in his thoughts for himself he includes his wife, not impossibly his justification is complete. Let us give our children healthy frames; health is the chief requirement in the battle of life. Let us do our best to train them to become decent men and women, and to give them such an education as shall fit them to pit themselves against their fellows. It is doubtful if we can do much more.

The influence of the parent over the child has been, and still is, exaggerated. The proverbialist's assertion, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," is all very well as a Sunday-school axiom, and in theory; in practice it is worth nothing at all. You may strive to train up a child to be, or to do, what you will; it will dree its own weird in the end, with total disregard of its early training. In good, sober truth the more strenuously you may endeavour to train a child to walk in any given direction, the more likely is it to move in a diametrically opposite one. The explanation is a perfectly simple one; it is merely an illustration of a natural law. When you unstring a bow it changes its shape; the more tightly it was strung, the greater the change. When the parental pressure is removed from the child the reaction comes, its natural tendencies will prevail; the stronger the pressure has been, the more pronounced will the reaction be.

No, go easy with the children. Let the bonds you bind them with be as little galling as they need be. Do not, if we can help it, let us regard them as subjects for experiments. Above all, do not let us cram down their throats our crotchets, our theories. They are as much entitled to live their own lives as we are, though they are our children. Let them, in the natural and reasonable interpretation of the words, be not bound but free. There are certain things which we should strive to teach them

—as to be honest, to be truthful, to know not fear. Courage is Heaven's own gift to the child, who is to become the man. If only we all had courage—the courage which looks defeat and disaster, time and eternity, unflinchingly, smilingly in the face, and which endures to the end, we should need but little else.

But though we strive our best to teach the children, as it were, the rudiments, we may fail. Indeed—for in such a matter, why should there be any beating about the bush?—it is probable we shall. Young children, like the children of an older growth, are not so teachable as certain of the moral-mongers would wish us to believe. Nature has been before us. What she has put in no teaching will put out, and what she has not put in no teaching will supply. In spite of all the multitude of the preachers, the thing is sure. If we parents, knowing ourselves, look into our own lives, do we not know that it is sure? It is amusing to observe the dismay with which some parents realise that all their efforts to induce or to compel their children to move in certain grooves have been of none avail. They strive to make of them one thing, and lo! they have become another. Their resentment is occasionally tragically comic. These people seem to think that children are given them to do with as they will. They are mistaken. They had better, for their own sakes, learn that the idea is an erroneous one at the beginning instead of at the end.

Neither in their youth nor in their age are children unqualified blessings. They are the cause to us of terrible anxiety, of positive suffering, of bitter disappointment. We have to bear everything for them, and then, not infrequently, when their turn comes, they decline to bear anything for us. *They are apt to be much harder on our faults than we were on theirs, to be our most merciless critics. And then to crown all, when old age comes, only too often, they leave us alone, giving us to understand that our ways are not as their ways, that our day is gone. These things apply to both rich and poor alike.

And yet, who that has had children would have been without them? Who has lost a child—though it be years and years since, and others have supplied its place—whose heart does not swell when his thoughts hark back, as now and then they will do, willy nilly, to the grave which holds it? If there are any such, they are of the sort who had better remain unnamed.

We may not want the children before they come—we do not, very often—but when they do come they twine themselves about our hearts with bonds that never shall be wholly loosened—never, though they may treat us with what may seem to us to be black ingratitude, and may drag our name through endless mire. Though we may curse them, we cannot get completely rid of the feeling that they are of us, that they were once our very selves. No, having been born to us, in one shape if not in another, our children walk with us to our graves.

If only they may walk hand in hand and eye to eye with us through life, and be still hand in hand and eye to eye with us in death! What greater boon can man ask than that?

TREMAYNE'S MADNESS.

A COMPLETE STORY.

WILL TREMAYNE and I were college friends, thirty years ago. He kept in the rooms beneath mine, in the corner of the quaint old red-brick court of St. John's, and I was one of the few men who knew him well. He was never very popular, for he was too reserved and exclusive, holding aloof from the rowing set—though he was perhaps the best oar in the first boat—and not sufficiently practical and definite in his aims and ideas for the reading men. Yet he was undoubtedly clever in a vague, erratic way, and to those who really knew him his manner was singularly charming, although his changes of mood were as capricious and sudden as a girl's, and a chance word might at any time throw him into a dreamy melancholy, or, more rarely, into a white intensity of passion. It is more than twenty years now since I saw him laid in Langthorne churchyard, and there can be no reason why I should not relate the strange events which spoiled and shortened his life.

How far, indeed, they were actual events, and how much was merely the vivid imaginings of a powerful but unbalanced intellect, I cannot say. I shall not attempt to explain or theorise, and from the simple statement of what I myself saw, and what Tremayne told me, each reader may draw his own conclusions.

At the end of my third year at Cambridge, as soon as we could get down after his Tripos, I went home with Tremayne. It was an unusually hot summer, I remember, and he had felt terribly the strain of

the long, sultry days in the Senate House, with the air quivering with heat, and the silence only broken by the swish of the examiners' gowns, as they marched slowly down the long rows of tables, and the irritating scratching of flying pens. It was a relief to get away into the country, to the Vicarage of the little Midland village where Will lived with his uncle. We had a very quiet time there, fishing and rambling across country, and falling in love—both of us—with Kitty Maitland at the Hall. I am a prosaic old bachelor now, as dry as my briefs, but I too have lived in Arcadia and dreamed my dreams. They were never anything but dreams with me, and yet they have had more influence on my life than many realities.

One night, as we sat smoking in the garden, Tremayne, who had fallen into a dreamy mood, suddenly sprang up and said:

"Bob, you've never seen the old church by moonlight, have you? Let's pay an evening call on the knights and dames in marble."

"All right," I said lazily; "get the keys."

We strolled across the grass where the yew-trees cast strange black shadows over the mounds and tombstones, and up the aisle to the chapel, where, behind a carved oak screen, and under their canopies of marble, lay the effigies of two knights and a lady. The moonlight poured down on them in all the splendour of a cloudless night in June, and the flickering shadow of a branch outside played weirdly over the face of one gigantic figure carved in full armour.

"Queer-looking old chap, isn't he?" said Will; "doesn't look as if he'd stick at much. He was an awful brute in the old days, you know, when the ruin on the hill was his baronial hall. The villagers say he visits it once a year still. He would be buried standing up, and no one dared to disobey him, even when he was dead; so, down in the vault below, his coffin stands on end, with a hole in the lead where his skull looks out. I've seen it many a time."

"How ghastly!" I said. "Who was he?"

"Oh, an ancient enemy of my forefathers. There's an old monkish chronicle at the Vicarage, which tells how he and Gulielmus Tremagnus—same name as mine—fell out about some lady. My ancestor had the pull of him there, but the old blackguard got his revenge, for he put an arrow through him from behind a tree, soon after the

wedding. Let's go down and beard him in his vault, and tell him what we think of him."

"Don't be a fool, Tremayne!" I said; "what is the earthly good of going down there now?"

"Rubbish!" he answered, laughing; "I believe you're afraid."

"Oh, well then, if that's what you think," I said, "come on;" and I took up a candle from the lectern, lighted it, and stood waiting.

He lifted a stone in the floor, and we went down a flight of stone steps, feeling our way along the chill, damp walls. The place was heavy with the peculiar unclean smell of mould and rotteness, thick with black darkness, and, cold as it was, the air felt hot and close. I felt that I ought not to have allowed him to go, still nervous and excitable from the strain of his examination, but the taunt of fear irritated me and made me careless.

"Here you are, Bob," he said, stepping in front of a huge leaden coffin standing upright against the wall; "bring the candle along."

I held it high above my head, and peered into the darkness. The next moment I stepped back aghast, for through a jagged hole there leered out upon us a yellow skull, with what seemed to my fancy a malignant, fiendish grin. As I stood there looking into its eyeless sockets, Tremayne began to talk to it, at first in a flippant, mocking way; but gradually he got excited, and addressed it as if it were a living thing, taunting it with the evil it had done, and its present impotence. He seemed carried away by a freakish madness, snapped his fingers at the grisly thing, defied it, and heaped insults on it.

"Tremayne," I gasped at last, "for Heaven's sake, come away. You're not yourself; come out of this foul air." As I clutched his arm, something—I suppose it was a bat—flew suddenly out from behind the skull, and knocked the candle out of my hand, and as we struggled up the steps through the pitchy darkness, a low, evil chuckle seemed to come from behind us.

"Did you see it?" he panted with dry lips and a drawn, ashen face, leaning heavily against the church door. "Did you see it? It was his soul, his devil's soul flew out."

"Nonsense, man," I said; "it was a bat or an owl. You are feverish and hysterical. Over-work has pulled your nerves to pieces. Come home and get to bed."

"But it laughed at me. Didn't you hear it laugh at me?"

"Why, Tremayne," I said, "you can imagine hearing anything in your state. A man's senses play him queer tricks when he's unstrung. Pull yourself together, and come away."

He was in a high fever by the time I got him home, and I sat by his bed for night after night, as he tossed and raved; but at last he pulled through. We never mentioned that night again, and as soon as he was strong enough his uncle took him away to the south of France. I returned to Cambridge, finished my law course, and settled down in chambers to wait for briefs, and somehow never met Tremayne again for years. But I heard from him occasionally, heard of his engagement to Kitty Maitland, and heard, a little later, of her death—my poor Kitty!

It was a sad thing. She was only nineteen, and their engagement was hardly a month old, when she was drowned one night in the little river just below the mill. No one quite knew how it happened. I did not hear of it from Tremayne himself, for he broke down again, and hung between life and death for weeks. I think he was never the same man again after that—perhaps his brain was unsettled, and morbid fancies grew on him, but it is hard to say.

One night, as I was sitting alone in my rooms, a telegram was brought up to me. It was from Tremayne, begging me to go to him at once. I had not heard of him since Kitty's death, and I felt at once that I must go. I did not know why, but a strange, chilly sensation came over me, and I thought of that night in the church.

It was a heavy, sultry October evening when I stepped out of the train at Langthorne, and the red moon loomed large and low through the rising mist, while fitful little gusts of wind in the tree-tops foreboded a coming storm. Tremayne was there on the platform, but I hardly recognised in the haggard, wild-eyed man who met me the athlete who had stroked our college boat to the head of the river so short a time before.

"I'm glad you've come, Bob," he said; "you won't have very long to be with me, though."

"Oh, I can stay a week if you like," I answered. "My clients are not so numerous as all that."

"I don't mean that," he said. "I have not long to stay with you."

"Why, Will, you have years before you yet," I replied. "You must not get these fancies into your head, old man. Others beside you have been hardly used by Fate, and lived to be happy enough."

"Perhaps so," he answered wearily; "my case is different. I have had my warning, and Heaven only knows what my end will be like, but it will come soon."

"Will," I said, "it is worse than foolish to talk like this. It's a cowardly weakness to give way to such gloomy ideas."

But he only shook his head gloomily, and returned the same answer to all I said:

"Wait till you have heard my story."

And that evening he told it me. I cannot say how much of it is to be literally believed, how much is only the diseased imagination of an unbalanced brain. But it was an awful thing to hear, as he spoke in a low, rapid voice, with feverish energy, while the rising wind howled among the tossing trees, and the moon scudded through the driving black clouds.

"Bob," he said, "you remember that night in the church, don't you? When I was mad, and mocked at that cursed thing. Do you recollect how it laughed at me in the dark? I have seen it twice since then—twice in the open day—and each time it laughed the same hellish laugh. Don't interrupt me"—as I began to protest—"I tell you solemnly it has cursed my life, and its devilish revenge will be consummated very soon. I dare say you think I am mad now. I only wonder that I am not."

"It killed my darling. You may well start, but I know it as well as if my eyes had seen it. This is the night when, by some awful power, it leaves that vault, and goes back to the ruin where it lived its evil life five hundred years ago. It was a year ago to-night that Kitty died. I came back from the town early in the evening, and started for the Hall. When I got to the old wooden bridge—you know it, don't you? where we used to fish below the mill-pool—I saw her leaning on the rail, watching the sunset on the water. She did not seem to hear me coming; I stood close behind her and said 'Kitty!'—and then, my God! I can see it now—the figure turned, and instead of my darling's flower face, I was looking straight into that yellow skull, with its fixed devil's grin. I heard it laugh at me, its hollow, chuckling laugh; you remember it, don't you, Bob?"

I nodded silently, and he went on:

"I don't know what happened then. I

suppose I fainted. The next thing that I remember was looking round with a vague wonder at finding myself in the parlour at the mill, with the doctor and the miller's wife bending over me. I must have been unconscious some time, for it was quite dark then. I would not rest as they told me, but hurried as well as I could to the Hall. They told me that she had gone to the Vicarage. I went back, but she was not there. We searched for her in vain all the night, but in the morning I found her down by the river bank, just below the bridge, quite dead—my darling—quite dead.

"They said it was an accident, that the handrail was old and rotten, and must have given way as she leaned on it. But I know better, Bob. And I swear to you, whether you will believe it or not—on her little white throat were five livid marks, the print of a bony hand!"

"My dear Tremayne," I said, struggling to shake off the thrill of horror that came over me, "you are allowing your whole life to be distorted by the hideous fancies of one night. The fact is that, whenever your brain is over-worked and you are run down generally, the vivid impression of that ghastly thing comes before you. Those bruises might easily have been caused by the stones in the river. Now take my advice. Get the doctor to make you up something which will give you a sound night's rest, and to-morrow you must get right away from this place. Go to Algiers, or the Cape—anywhere quite away from here."

He shook his head gloomily.

"I shall be sleeping sound enough to-morrow, Bob," he said; "let me finish my story. I saw it again yesterday—here, in this very room!"

Involuntarily I looked round with something of a start, for he was gazing with a wild, fixed stare behind me.

"You needn't be frightened," he said, with a crackling little laugh; "there's nothing there now. It was yesterday morning. I came in tired after a long walk, and as I opened the door I saw myself—as clearly as I see you now—leaning with arms on the mantelpiece, and head turned towards the mirror."

"Of course you saw yourself, Will," I said, "with a mirror opposite you. A man usually does."

"But a man does not see his own back, Bob; and he does not see what I did as I looked over its shoulder. The figure—my figure—never turned or moved, but through

the glass, in the full sunlight, that devil looked out at me, with its fleshless jaws parted in their hollow grin. I did not faint then, but struck full at it with my stick, cursing it as I struck. The mirror flew into fragments, and the thing was gone; but through the crash of the breaking glass I heard the echo of its hateful, jeering laugh."

He paused a moment; then his breath came hard and fast as he went on in a hurried whisper I could hardly catch:

"It is a year ago to-night, Bob, since Kitty died."

I argued with him for a long time. I told him it was a hallucination due to his nervous condition, and that in the morning he would laugh at these fancies. But it was no use; the same weary smile and shake of the head were all his answer, and at last we parted and went to bed.

I could not sleep, but lay listening to the growing storm, and starting up at every little sound that seemed to my excited mind to come from the next room, where Tremayne slept. Quite suddenly the wind dropped, and what seemed an endless silence followed—a dead stillness without a sound in the black darkness, except the monotonous ticking of my watch, which beat on my ear like the strokes of a hammer.

Then at last the storm burst, and every little detail of the room leaped out in the lurid blaze of the lightning. The thunder crashed and rolled among the hills, and the rain rattled like bullets on the tiles. Another lull, as the storm seemed gathering up all its force for a madder burst of fury, and then, through the horrible silence, came a wild shriek of terror.

I sprang up, seized a candle, and hurried out into the corridor. As I opened the door of his room, I staggered back, half blinded by a jagged flash, which cut through the murky blackness, and as the roar of the thunder rolled away, it rattled and rang like a mocking peal of infernal laughter. Tremayne was stretched across the bed, and on his face an expression of agonised horror, such as I hope never to see again. It was a terrible sight, but one thing was the strangest of all, and I turned faint and sick as I noticed it. I do not know what was the cause of it; whether it was a curious effect of electricity, or some peculiar effusion of blood, or perhaps something stranger still.

But I tell it as the exact and simple truth. When we raised him up, and his head fell back on the pillow, I saw on his throat five long black marks, like the grip of a skeleton hand.

THE EARLY DAYS OF PUBLIC CONCERTS.

Few, probably, of the thousands who frequent the numerous musical performances of the London Season know much of the early history of public concerts in this country, or remember Banister with gratitude as being the first to initiate them. It is difficult to imagine a time when musical entertainments were given in public-houses, and the performers hired by the landlords. At Court, or at the mansions of the nobility, concerts might indeed be heard, but as Sir John Hawkins complains in his "History of Music," the general public had little or no opportunity of listening to high-class music: "Half a dozen of fiddlers would scrape Sellenger's—or St. Leger's—Round, or 'John, Come Kiss Me,' or 'Old Sir Simon the King,' with divisions, till themselves and their audience were tired; after which as many players on the hautboy would, in the most harsh and discordant tones, grate forth 'Green Sleeves,' 'Yellow Stockings,' 'Gillian of Croydon,' or some such common dance tune, and the people thought it fair music."

To King Charles the Second we owe in great measure the revival of interest in music and the other arts, which had suffered a temporary eclipse during the years of the Commonwealth. That pleasure-loving monarch, following the example of the French Court in most things, possessed a band composed of twenty-four violins, led by a certain Baltzar, who was born at Lübeck, and settled in England about the year 1656. He was the first great violinist that had been heard in this country at that date, and Evelyn tells us what he thought of his playing. In an entry in his Diary for March the fourth, 1656-57, he says: "This night I was invited by Mr. Roger L'Estrange to hear the incomparable Lubicer—i.e., native of Lübeck—on the violin. His variety on a few notes and plaine ground with that wonderful dexterity was admirable. Tho' a young man, yet so perfect and skilful that there was nothing, however cross and perplex, brought to him by our artists, which he did not play off at sight with ravishing sweetnesse and improvements, to the astonishment of our best masters. In sum he played on ye simple instrument a full concert, so as the rest flung down their instruments, acknowledging ye victory."

Many foreign musicians must now have been attracted to this country, for the same

writer informs us that he dined on a certain occasion—a few years later on—at Arundel House, and there heard “excellent musiq perform’d by the ablest masters, both French and English, on the orboes, viols, organs, and voices, as an exercise against the coming of ye queene purposely composed for her chapell.”

John Banister, who succeeded Baltzar as leader of the King’s band, was the son of one of the “waits” of the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, and was sent by Charles the Second to further his musical instruction in France. On his return he was appointed to the band at a salary of forty pounds per annum, paid quarterly. Eventually, however, he lost this post for some remark adverse to the appointment of French musicians to the Royal band, and the ever-ready ear of Pepys picked up the talk in Court circles, “how the King’s viallin Banister is mad that the King hath a Frenchman come to be chief of some part of the King’s musique.” To his dismissal we perhaps owe the establishment of the series of public concerts given in London under his direction, the first of which took place on the thirtieth of December, 1672. The advertisement in the “London Gazette” ran as follows:

“These are to give notice that at Mr. John Banister’s house—now called the Musick School—over against the ‘George Tavern,’ in White Fryers, the present Monday, will be musick performed by excellent masters, beginning precisely at four of the clock in the afternoon, and every afternoon for the future, precisely at the same hour.”

In North’s “Manuscript Memoirs of Music,” according to Dr. Burney, we have a more minute account of these performances:

“Banister having procured a large room in White Fryars, near the Temple back gate, and erected an elevated box or gallery for the musicians, whose modesty required curtains, the rest of the room was filled with seats and small tables, alehouse fashion. One shilling, which was the price of admission, entitled the audience to call for what they pleased. There was very good music, for Banister found means to procure the best bands in London, and some voices to assist him. And there wanted no variety, for Banister, besides playing on the violin, did wonders on the flageolet to a thro’ base, and several other masters also played solos.” Four years later these concerts were still advertised: “At the Academy in Little Lincoln’s Inn Fields, will begin the first

part of the Parley of Instruments composed by Mr. John Banister.” They would appear to have been held pretty regularly, almost up to the date of his death, which took place in October, 1679.

Another public benefactor as regards music was Thomas Britton, the celebrated “musical small-coalman,” who, coming up as a boy from Northamptonshire to London, was apprenticed to a vendor of small-coal in St. John Street, Clerkenwell. Some years later we find him living in a house at the north-east corner of Jerusalem Passage, where now stands the “Bull’s Head Inn.” In the stable attached to this house he established, in 1678, a musical club, which attained a speedy celebrity. Access to this abode of the Muses was gained by a ladder-like staircase from the outside. Ned Ward, his neighbour, had but a poor opinion of its situation: “His Hut wherein he dwells, which has long been honoured with such good Company, looks withoutside as if some of his ancestors had happened to be Executors to old Snorling Diogenes, and that they had carefully transplanted the Athenian Tub into Clerkenwell; for his house is not much higher than a Canary Pipe, and the window of his State room but very little bigger than the bung-hole of a cask.”

Concerts were held here on every Thursday for nearly forty years. At first there seems to have been no payment for admission, but after a time the yearly subscription came to be ten shillings, and coffee, according to Horace Walpole, was furnished at one penny the dish. Here Handel might have been heard playing as best he might on the primitive organ with its five stops; and Dr. Pepusch presided at the harpsichord—“a Rucker’s virginal, thought the best in Europe”—while Banister played first violin.

Among the other distinguished amateurs and professors were to be found Woolaston the painter, and John Hughes the poet—beauty and fashion being represented by the Duchess of Queensberry. Thoresby, in his Diary, tells us in June, 1712, that on his way home he “called at Mr. Britton’s, the noted small-coalman, where we heard a noble concert of music, vocal and instrumental, the best in town, to which most foreigners of distinction, for the fancy of it, occasionally resort.” His friend the poet Hughes wrote the well-known lines under Woolaston’s portrait of him:

Though mean thy rank, yet in thy humble cell
Did gentle peace and arts unpurchased dwell
Well pleased, Apollo thither led his train
And music warbled in her sweetest strain;

while "to arte ally'd" he continued to sell small coal till his death in 1714.

Musie lovers, however, at this period were not entirely dependent on the enterprise of Britton. The concerts instituted by Talbot Young, in the first instance, at the sign of the "Dolphin and Crown," in St. Paul's Churchyard—then a celebrated haunt of musicians—soon attained a considerable amount of fame. In 1724 they were held at the "Castle Inn," in Paternoster Row, when, as Sir John Hawkins tells us, "auditors as well as performers were admitted subscribers, and tickets were delivered out to the members in rotation for the admission of ladies. Their fund enabling them, they hired second-rate singers from the operas, and many young persons of professions and trades that depended upon a numerous acquaintance were induced by motives of interest to become members of the 'Castle' Concert."

Italian opera was some time in gaining a footing in this country, and at the close of the seventeenth century Italian vocalists would seem to have been rare. An advertisement in the "London Gazette" for 1692 acquaints the public that "the Italian lady, that is lately come over—that is so famous for her singing—though it has been reported that she will sing no more in the Consort at York Buildings; yet this is to give notice that next Tuesday, January the tenth, she will sing there, and so continue during the season."

The following year we find Signor Tcsi calling attention to his "consort of musick in Charles Street, in Covent Garden, about eight of the clock in the evening." The year 1710 is a famous one in the history of English music, for it not only saw the founding of the "Academy of Ancient Music," but witnessed the arrival of Handel, the forerunner of the many famous composers and performers, who were nowhere more at home than in this country. In the following year, "Rinaldo," his earliest opera, was produced. He was the first, moreover, to introduce organ concerts into England.

The Academy, which grew out of an association formed at the "Crown and Anchor Tavern" in the Strand, was for some time under the direction of Dr. Pepusch, the gentlemen and boys of St. Paul's and the Chapel Royal taking part in the performances. During its rather chequered career it had the honour of performing Handel's "Esther," the members appearing dressed in character, and its success is said to have led the composer to consider the desirability of

establishing oratorio performances at Covent Garden.

The Academy existed about eighty years, and saw many secessions from its ranks during that rather extensive period. On one occasion Dr. Greene, in rivalry, opened the Apollo Room in the "Devil Tavern," whereupon Handel, in his broken English, is reported to have said that "De toctor Greene is gone to the tefel."

The programme of a concert given at Drury Lane in May, 1722, for the benefit of Signor Carbonelli—a celebrated violin player, brought over to this country by the Duke of Rutland—gives us some idea of the performances in the days of George the First. The programme was divided into three Acts, the first of which consisted of "A New Concerto for Two Trumpets, composed and performed by Grano and others," and a Concerto by Signor Carbonelli. In the Second Act was to be found "A Concerto with Two Hautbois and Two Flutes," as well as "A Concerto on the Base Violin by Pippo." The third part included "A Solo on the Arch-lute by Signor Vebar," and a "New Concerto on the Little Flute," with "A Concerto on Two Trumpets by Grano and others," by way of finale. Each act likewise contained, by way of variety, a song by Mrs. Barbier, about whom history does not tell us much. As for Carbonelli, he was a favourite pupil of Corelli.

Towards the middle of the last century, lovers of al-fresco music were abundantly catered for at Ranelagh and Vauxhall. Ranelagh was opened for evening concerts in 1742, with Festing as leader of the band, and choruses from the oratorios were a special feature of these entertainments. Here appeared one of the finest singers of the day, in the person of John Beard, for whom Handel composed some of his greatest tenor parts, as in the "Messiah," "Israel in Egypt," and other works. Charles Dibdin considered him "taken altogether, as the best English singer." On the stage his fame equalled that won on the concert platform, his favourite character being Macheath in Gay's "Beggar's Opera."

The principal lady vocalist—who also excelled in oratorio—was Giulia Frasi. "She was young and interesting in person, with a sweet, clear voice and a smooth, chaste style of singing," according to Dr. Burney. He also hints that this lady was not much given to application and diligence, and tells us that when she informed Handel that she was going to

study hard and was going to learn thoroughly, that great musician replied: "Ah—vaat may we not expect!"

Some years later on we find Tenducci, the idol of the fashionable world, singing at Ranelagh; one of his chief successes being gained in Dr. Arne's "Artaxerxes." In company with that composer he travelled to Scotland and Ireland, and in London especially is said to have received enormous sums for his performances. Tenducci was a friend of the Mozart family, and may have heard the future author of "Don Giovanni," then but eight years old, play at Ranelagh on the harpsichord and organ several pieces of his own composition for the benefit of a charity.

Walpole tells us in 1777 that it was the fashion to go to Ranelagh two hours after it is over. "You may not believe this, but it was literal. The music ends at ten and the company go at twelve." This practice led to the concert being commenced at a later hour than before.

Ranelagh continued in existence until the early years of the present century, but succumbed to the rival attractions of Vauxhall—the gardens of which seemed such an earthly paradise to our ancestors. Among the numberless associations of this spot those connected with music and song are not the least interesting. For these gardens Dr. Arne, the author of "Rule Britannia" and "Where the Bee Sucks," composed many a song, some excellently interpreted by his wife; others, such as "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "Blow, Blow, thou Winter Wind," being first heard from the lips of Thomas Lowe, who, according to Dibdin, excelled even Beard as a singer of simple love songs.

Did space permit how much could be said of its famous singers for nearly a century: Joseph Vernon, the tenor; Miss Poole, afterwards Mrs. Dickens, who played Handel's concertos at six and appeared at Vauxhall at thirteen; Mrs. Bland, who excelled in English ballad singing; and a host of others, including Incedon, Miss Stephens and Madame Vestris.

Goldsmith praises the singers of his day, and the excellent band; "the music, the entertainments, but particularly the singing, diffused that good humour among us which constitutes the true happiness of society."

But to return from the

... walks, orchestras, colonnades, The lamps and trees, in mingled lights and shades, which graced Vauxhall—or Spring Gardens as they were long called—the more

serious side of music was by no means neglected, as we gather from the establishment of the "Concerts of Ancient Music," the idea of which had been originally suggested by the Earl of Sandwich. Its concerts were held in rooms in Tottenham Street up to the end of the last century, and for several years in the concert room of the Opera House. Finally these concerts took place permanently in Hanover Square. In these time-honoured rooms—now a club—Madame Catalani made her first appearance, as also Miss Stephens, the future Countess of Essex.

Mrs. Cornely's Rooms in Soho Square succeeded Hickford's Dancing School in the Haymarket as a fashionable place for concerts and other entertainments, and the Hanover Square Rooms were for some time carried on by Sir John Gallini, the Court dancing master, in a similar fashion. Masquerades, "festinós," assemblies, and so forth alternated with more serious musical productions. The opening of these rooms was attended by a concert given by Charles Abel and John Christian Bach, who continued for several years to entertain the musical world here; while later on the "Professional Concerts" were rivalled by those of Salomon the violinist, at which Haydn, in the closing years of the last century, conducted his twelve "grand" symphonies.

The Ancient Concerts were meanwhile patronised by royalty, and George the Third would constantly show his interest in them by writing out the programmes of the performances with his own hand. He was often present at Hanover Square, accompanied by Queen Charlotte, and is said to have had a chamber added to the side—to which he presented a large gilt looking-glass—which was called the "Queen's Tea-Room." The pieces performed at the Ancient Concerts were obliged to be at least five-and-twenty years old, and all modern music was thus rigorously excluded. At the close of the last century, Mrs. Billington, who is said to have been the finest singer of the age, appeared at these concerts. Sir Joshua Reynolds has painted her as Saint Cecilia, and for years her only rival was Madame Mara, who won so much fame at the Handel Festivals.

The Academy of Ancient Music closed its career in 1792, but no dearth of music was apparent. Harrison and Knyvett had just set on foot the "Vocal Concerts," and a little later on Mrs. Billington, John

Braham, and Signor Naldi delighted audiences at Willis's Rooms, while no one was more popular than Madame Catalani in Hanover Square.

In 1813 the Philharmonic Society, which still flourishes among us, was founded, and with its establishment we seem to reach the limit of the early days of concerts, and to enter a period familiar to many with its memories of Beethoven and Cherubini, Spohr, Mendelssohn, and Wagner—the last of whom conducted the Society's concerts in 1855.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "The Thirteenth Brydain," "Catherine Maidment's Burden," "Benefit of Clergy," "The Vicar's Aunt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Is Dr. Meredith not in, then?"

Mrs. French stood with the handle of the front door of her master's house in her hand, staring blankly at her questioner. Only once had the slight, grey-clothed figure presented itself at that door since the day of Dr. Godfrey's arrival in Mary Combe. On that one solitary occasion it had been only an urgent necessity for summoning Dr. Meredith without delay that had led to his assistant's appearance at his house; and the appearance had been an appearance only, for the two had left together at once.

Mrs. French had, at first, rather marvelled at this circumstance. She had confidently expected that, as she phrased it, she should "have that there young doctor, mornin' noon and night, dancin' in and out on the clean doorsteps." And she had grumbled accordingly, deeply and bitterly, in the dual solitude of the kitchen tea-table. But finding as the days went on that the sort of daily hornpipe that her imagination had described was not provided by Dr. Meredith's assistant, she grew more tranquil; and even began to acquiesce in the excellencies which all her friends who "dropped in" at Dr. Meredith's back door with the washing, the coals, or a message, as the case might be, had discovered in "the young doctor." And at the end of ten days she formulated in Dr. Godfrey's honour her very highest praise: namely, that he evidently was "a young man as kep' himself to himself."

As this appreciative estimate had remained undisturbed save by that one brief appearance, Mrs. French's calculations were much upset, when on this particular even-

ing, at six o'clock, Dr. Godfrey appeared, and not only enquired anxiously for Dr. Meredith, but displayed an almost aggressive impatience for an answer.

"If he is not at home now, will you be so good as to tell me when you expect him?"

Dr. Godfrey uttered this amplification of the question, though politely enough, rather shortly.

Its effect on Mrs. French was to make her loosen her hold of the door-handle and begin to wipe her hands energetically on her apron. The apron in question was a neat black alpaca one, for Mrs. French was always "dressed" long before this hour; and her hands were spotless; but the gesture transcended details. It was Mrs. French's comprehensive way of intimating that she was much occupied, and that the person who addressed her was trifling with articles of priceless value; namely, her time and her thoughts.

"Dr. Meredith, did you say, sir?" she said at length. "You were wishful to see him?"

Althea's impatient nod would have hurried any one else, but it was completely lost on Mrs. French's massive perceptions.

"I don't know that he's out, sir," she continued, "but I can't say that he's in. He came home an hour ago from somewhere, but he went somewhere else after, and I can't feel sure that he got back from that. I seem to think I heard him in the surgery talkin' to Alfred Johnson a while back, but then I thought I heard the gate go after him just now. Howsomever, that may have been you comin' in, sir. I might step through to the surgery and ask Alfred if he's there. He'll know if it was him went out."

Mrs. French paused at the end of this lucid statement to take breath. The worthy woman, being what she called "near of sight," did not clearly see Althea's sharply-knitted brows. If she had, the remainder of her words might possibly have remained unuttered.

"Step inside, sir, if you please," she said, "while I go and ask Alfred what he thinks."

The invitation was one which Mrs. French gave, as a matter of obvious politeness, to every enquirer after Dr. Meredith. But though she knew no reason for the expectation, she did expect, vaguely, that it would be refused. She was the more surprised when Dr. Godfrey entered, without a word, and, still without a word, pushed the sitting-room door, which was ajar, wider open, and took up a position within the doorway.

"Please tell Dr. Meredith, if he is in, that I am waiting for him here," she said, so firmly that Mrs. French's surprise was transmuted into deferential submission, and she turned and went, as fast as her dignity would let her, down the passage in the direction of the surgery door. The entrance through the sitting-room was fitted with a patent latch, and Dr. Meredith alone used it.

Left alone, Althea Godfrey's pose changed curiously, together with her face. The former grew suddenly very rigid, like that of a person who is prepared to meet a strain of some sort. The latter, which had been slightly flushed when she came up to the door, became very pale. But an instant later, in odd contrast to the pallor, a great wave of emotion rose on it, and infused into every feature a strong, sentient passion of some sort. Under this influence her sombre grey eyes burned brilliantly, and her set mouth changed into curves which she kept in control with evident difficulty, while her hand clenched and unclenched itself almost nervously.

Five minutes passed; minutes during which Alfred Johnson's thoughts and Mrs. French's vision together apparently succeeded in discovering what they were exercised upon. For at the expiration of that time, the door from the surgery into the sitting-room was opened with a quick click, and Dr. Meredith himself emerged from it.

"Well!" he said.

Althea, who was hidden from his sight by the other door, took two steps forward into the room, shut the door behind her, and turned sharply to him. At his voice all the new emotion in her face had intensified suddenly, and yet her pose, as she stood facing him, with one hand resting on the table, was curiously fixed and rigid.

He scanned her for an instant with apparently careless interest.

"Mrs. French said you wanted me," he said indifferently.

Then his face suddenly altered, and his manner too. Both were alive with a quick professional interest.

"You've come back from Stoke Vere, of course!" he exclaimed. "What about Rose Swinton?"

Althea did not answer immediately. She suddenly pulled out a chair and sat down on it, rather heavily. Dr. Meredith did not seem to notice the movement, but her pause he did notice.

"Well!" he said, almost sharply. "What's wrong? What did you think of her. Is it anything serious?"

Althea lifted her face; since she sat down she had been staring steadily at the shining blacklead of the grate, which was just opposite to her. Her eyes were like two great burning stars in her pale face.

"It will be, I imagine," she said, in a short, icy tone. "Miss Rose Swinton appears to court illness; she has carefully, now, taken every precaution to ensure an attack of pleurisy; and a sharp attack too, if I'm not mistaken," she added emphatically.

"Pleurisy!" Dr. Meredith's tone was expressive of horror. "And there isn't a shred of constitution about her, for all her outward show of health! What makes you come to that conclusion, Thea, pray! What are the symptoms you are going upon?"

Althea gave him, in the stoniest and most stolid business-like tone, the technical details of the case.

"Ah!" he said, when he had heard her through, which did not take long, for her account was as short as it could be made, consistently with coherence; "I'll send over at once, of course, with what you have ordered; and to-morrow we had better, one of us, go to Stoke Vere the first thing after breakfast."

Quite suddenly, and with a very hasty gesture, Althea rose from her chair and pushed it aside.

"There is no need to say 'one of us,'" she said, in the same icy tone in which she had spoken throughout. "You will have the goodness to go to Stoke Vere yourself, as early as you wish—before daylight if you like"; she broke off with a short laugh. "But it is you and not I who go, please. I came here on purpose to say this to you; to tell you that I entirely decline to attend Miss Swinton after to-day. You will please consider yourself wholly and solely responsible for the case."

She laid her hand heavily on the top rail of her chair as she ended. Dr. Meredith stood looking at her with wonder in his eyes.

"I don't see why you should be so anxious to impress this on me," he said, in a dull, bewildered voice. "There really is no need for this vehemence. I will, of course, take the case. In fact, I had no thought of doing otherwise. I only asked you to go this afternoon because it was absolutely impossible for me to go myself. I should have preferred to go, and quite intended to have done so. I thought I made that plain to you this afternoon."

In his surprise at her manner, he was

speaking with a forcibleness that was a trifle measured, and Althea broke sharply in on his last words with another short laugh that was both dry and harsh.

"Perfectly so! Thank you!" she said. "Perfectly plain, you made it! You needn't trouble to explain any further. I quite understand, I assure you! You also understand, I think."

Before Dr. Meredith had had time to answer, Althea turned and walked rapidly out of the room without another word or look.

Dr. Meredith stood fixed to the spot where she had left him for some three minutes. Then he flung himself into the chair she had sat in, and decided with a sigh that was rather more like a groan, that "Thes's idiotic behaviour was going to turn her brain now."

He might well groan, poor man! If any one knowing the circumstances had asked him what he meant to do, how he meant to break up this untenable situation, he would have confessed his utter inability to answer. He would have said that there was nothing to be done; he might possibly have expressed his utterly hopeless longing for some "*dens ex machinâ*" to do what he could not hope to do. He little dreamed that had he only known how to listen he might this very day have heard in the far distance the chariot wheels of that same rescuing and approaching deity. But being a mortal only, and a man only, which is to be doubly a mortal as far as the limits of intuition are concerned, he neither listened nor heard.

He simply rose from his chair with a strong word or two, and rang the bell in a manner which threatened to pull it down, and brought Mrs. French in, panting for breath, to enquire the reason, and thereupon to explain, in a somewhat quivering manner, that the dinner was, as yet, "nothink like ready, sir."

Althea Godfrey meanwhile had walked rapidly through Dr. Meredith's garden, and even more rapidly up the Mary Combe street to her rooms. Not one pause did she make; not one look did she give on one side or the other; it was apparently simply from the constraining force of habit that she lifted her head to return the cordial greetings tendered to her by the few people she met; on she went unhesitatingly, until she reached the Johnsons' house. Mrs. Johnson dispensed with the necessity of giving her lodger a latch-key by a very simple process. She left the door always, as she had explained very early in the

proceedings, "on the jar; so as you can go in and out as you wish, sir."

It was "on the jar" now; rather widely so, as if waiting for Althea's return. She entered therefore without touching it, and in the like silence entered her own room, the door of which also was slightly open. She pulled it together behind her, but apparently she did not realise the fact that she had not closed it; indeed, she seemed to realise absolutely nothing as she crossed the little room and flung herself heavily into an arm-chair in the corner farthest from the window.

Exactly opposite to her own door, on the other side of the very narrow passage, was another door, and this last was the entrance to Mrs. Johnson's "best room." This was scarcely worthy of its imposing name, for it was in reality nothing but a strip cut off from the shop, with a rather small back window looking out on what Mrs. Johnson considered a very dull prospect compared to that of the Mary Combe street: namely, that of her neat and flowery little bit of back garden.

But when circumstances in the form of uncertain trade, and many small representatives of the house of Johnson, had induced Mrs. Johnson to devote her best downstairs room to lodgers, she had decided, and so put the case before her husband that he also had decided, that she must appropriate this slip of a room for her own ends. She could not, she said trenchantly, "do with nothing but the kitchen for best." Whereupon Mr. Johnson, being a thoroughly accommodating person, had removed thence several odds and ends of his stock-in-trade, which were characterised by his wife as "lumber," and she had forthwith, having duly prepared it by many days of cleaning, placed therein that selection of smart chairs, antimacassars, and china ornaments, which were either too good for, or superfluous in, the lodger's room, and had consecrated the sanctum thus made to the very highest of high days. Such an era had occurred on this very afternoon, and in this wise,

Mrs. Green had had for two days an individual staying in her house who was vaguely described by Mary Combe as "company from London."

As a matter of fact, the mysterious entity was Mr. Green's niece, a parlourmaid in respectable service in Kensington, who came to Mary Combe about once in every two years for her holiday. As several of these occasions had taken place within comparatively recent memory, it might have been expected that Jane Chase's arrival

would have worn out its attendant excitement. But such was by no means the case. The halo caused to shine around the worthy young woman by the words "from London" never lessened; and during her stay she was, to the feminine population of Mary Combe, and to some of the sterner sex also, a much respected oracle, whom every one strove at once to consult and to honour.

Mrs. Johnson, as became Mrs. Green's "own cousin," took a prominent part in the last duty; and on this occasion had indeed gone so far as to give an invitation to the aunt and niece "to drink a cup of tea" at least a week before the latter had arrived. It had been duly accepted, and finally arranged to take place on this very evening.

The cup of tea had now been partaken of some two hours earlier, and the trio in Mrs. Johnson's best room were at present solacing their souls with social intercourse. In the heat of conversation, tea, and the weather, the little "best room" had become very oppressively hot, and Mrs. Johnson, who was sitting near the door, had pushed it, for the sake of coolness, slightly open.

Just before Althea's silent entrance into her own room, a sort of crisis had arrived in the conversation. Jane Chase, an alert, thin young woman of twenty-nine or thirty, with a good carriage, had discoursed to her two open-mouthed listeners of all the subjects her well-stored brain contained. She had lavished on them much authentic information, gathered by her from a society paper in the waste-paper basket of her mistress's drawing-room, concerning the private sentiments of the Royal Family about each other's actions; she had given a sketchy but terrifying outline of current Radical politics, as imparted to her through the medium of the sarcastic dinner-table conversation of a Conservative master; and she had held forth long and learnedly on the "very latest thing" in fashionable dress, kindly exemplifying the same by standing up, that her hearers might see on her own person this pink of modern perfection in attire. And on this climax had followed a pause—a pause during which Mrs. Green sat in proud enjoyment of her niece's powers as an entertainer, while Mrs. Johnson fidgeted on her chair, most anxious, both for the sake of self-respect and repayment, to find some topic of interest belonging to Mary Combe. Suddenly something seemed to strike her, and she said abruptly:

"You know I told you, Miss Chase, when we was havin' our tea, of my new lodger?"

Jane Chase gave a polite acquiescence.

"I told you," continued Mrs. Johnson, "that he was a 'sistant, but I don't think I said anything about our new doctor as he's 'sistant to."

"No?" said Miss Chase, endeavouring to infuse into her voice some of the graceful interest she had observed in her mistress's use of that monosyllable to callers. "No, you didn't, Mrs. Johnson."

Mrs. Johnson's eyes brightened. Here at least was a fresh topic. Then they darkened as quickly.

"Very like your aunt has told you all there is to say," she remarked dejectedly.

"That I've not!" said Mrs. Green energetically. "I ain't told Jane nothing! I don't never seem to think of nothing when she's here."

"Well, he's new since you was last in Mary Combe, Miss Chase; quite new our doctor is!" The possibilities of her subject were rapidly unfolding themselves to Mrs. Johnson's mind, and she was growing volubly enthusiastic. "You remember old Dr. Garraway?" she went on, in the tone of one who wishes to heighten her hearer's interest by ample detail; "you remember him, Miss Chase? He as might have let people die before he'd get to their houses, so slow he was, with his years, and nearly poisoned John Rowe with givin' him the wrong medicine 'long of being half asleep at the time. That was last time you was here, or just before?"

"Just before," said Miss Chase politely.

"Well, he died about a year ago; and it was a good thing for the parish he did. And it's about nine months now since our new doctor come; Dr. Meredith, his name is."

Mrs. Johnson's voice was of a penetrating tone, and as she spoke the last sentence she unconsciously raised it. The words floated distinctly across the passage into Althea's room.

Althea sat up in her chair half abstractedly, apparently roused by the name from whatever she had been dwelling on in her dark, lonely corner, and brushed her short hair impatiently from her forehead, as if she were trying to realise exactly what it was that had roused her.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Johnson; "and a real nice doctor he is; as different from the old one as light from darkness, and as pleasant when you send for him! But there, Mrs. Green, you can speak to that. You've seen more o' Dr. Meredith in illness nor me."

The rheumatic attack to which Mrs. Green had alluded in that memorable conversation with Mrs. Allen terminated by Thomas Benjamin's choking and Dr. Godfrey's appearance, was, so to speak, a standing dish in the feast of mental research which her conversation laid before her friends, and it needed only the slightest of invitations to make her press it on their attention.

At the welcome opening thus provided she grasped instantly, and for the next ten minutes the other two were entertained with a recital by no means succinct of how the attack had come on, developed, and decreased, together with Mrs. Green's conversation with Dr. Meredith on each of his visits in each stage of her sufferings.

Mrs. Johnson and Miss Chase listened with faces each in their way expressive of politely concealed longing for the end; and as soon as her friend, by the means of a breathless sigh, gave an intimation that the harrowing and instructive account was closed, Mrs. Johnson took up the word again.

"He's as nice as he can be, in illness or out of it!" she said sententiously. "There's only one thing he wants, to my mind."

"And what is that?" asked Miss Chase.

Her interest in the conversation had quickened again. Possibly she thought that a ready encouragement might condense it slightly.

"He wants, and I've said it from the first, now, haven't I, Mrs. Green!—he wants to get married. Such a nice young man as him would be a deal better off, settled. I don't think nothink at all of that Mrs. French of his! And him being a doctor seems to want it all the more, as you may say. Folk think a lot of him now, to be

sure! but they'd think a lot more of him if he was married."

"Well, but isn't there any chance of it, if he's so attractive?" said Miss Chase with an air of extremely finished diction.

Althea was leaning forward, one hand on the corner of the table, her ears strained to catch every word.

"There's them as say there is, and them as say there ain't!" responded Mrs. Johnson oracularly.

"But you holds that there is, yourself," put in Mrs. Green. Apparently they had often discussed the same subject, and she knew precisely what points to help her friend to make.

"Well, then, yes; that I do. And I'm not the only one, though. There's more than me seen him talking to Miss Rose Swinton, the day she picked them roses as she was ridin' past his garden wall. And there's more than me see'd 'em get into the same carriage off Fern Morton station platform Christmas time. Set on her, he was by his ways."

Althea had risen. Her hand was gripping the mantelpiece now with a force that shook that rickety structure.

"And a very nice and very pretty young lady she is; and a nice pair they'd make," said Mrs. Green with some fervour. "I'm sure I hope we shall be having Miss Swinton here to live. They'd look well together, him and her."

Althea left her hold of the mantelpiece suddenly, walked to the door of the room and shut it. Then she walked straight through the door of communication into her bedroom, shut it and locked it, and flinging herself on the ground with her head on a chair, broke into stormy, stifled sobs and tears.

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacott," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greytown," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII. HAUNTED.

LEFT all alone for what seemed many hours, Dora at last roused herself and sat up in bed. She tried to gather her ideas together and to reason on all she had gone through, but nothing would make itself clear to her.

"I will get up," she thought, "I feel better, and Forster will be glad to see me downstairs. I want to go home. I wonder if places are really enchanted! When I was young I used to read of such castles, and old nurse used to say it was all make-believe, but now I feel as if there were something in this old place unlike any other spot. I want to breathe fresh air. I wonder what Adela is doing! Going round to see the poor people and looking after mother. I wonder if the De Lucys are there still! I want to see them all again. I want to get away from that old man, that dreadful old King!"

Dora shuddered a little and then laughed at herself for being afraid. She looked at her watch, but she had forgotten to wind it up; and when she was dressed she knelt down by the window which looked out over the glen, of which nothing could now be seen but a white mist, and said her prayers.

"Deliver us from evil," she said, and paused. What was evil? The evil one? Where was he? Dora had often felt puzzled about this very subject, but now the answer seemed to come to her. She thought: "Oh, that old King, he is evil;

I can't bear the thought of him. He looks so—so—but he is Penelope's father; I must not even think such a thing. How stupid I am! 'For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory.' Over evil, I suppose; God can bring good out of evil, He can make that old King good." That idea seemed difficult to realise, but she rose from her knees feeling better. What had happened? No one seemed to be about. She walked slowly downstairs, and then paused on the landing. She thought she heard a call, very faint, and she paused to listen, but all was silent. Then she went down another flight and came at last into the main portion of the building. The fog, instead of clearing, had settled down again, denser, whiter, more mysterious than before. There could be no pleasure walk to-day. The great clock in the hall that belonged to old days, and was somewhat evil in appearance, pointed to the hour of two. It was then luncheon-time, so she made her way through silent rooms and passages to the dining-room.

She was relieved when she heard another step. It was that of the Duke.

"Miss Dora! So you are better, I am glad to see. You were overtired—over-excited, I hear. The luncheon is ready, but I can't imagine where the others are; I have been looking for Penelope and the gentlemen."

"She came to see me this morning, and since then I have been asleep. I am better; I think I am all right."

"Come, then, Miss Dora, we will not wait. You must be hungry."

The Duke rang the bell. The footman brought in the luncheon and retired, as the Duke had told him not to stay.

Dora felt shy and awkward, and wished some one else would come in. The vision

of the King and his quest still filled her mind, and, as if the Duke could read her thoughts, he began:

"You helped, I hear, to discover the family treasure?"

"Oh, is it true? But the King did not wish any one to know."

"It was always an old saying in the family that money would be found when the fortune of the Winskells was at a low ebb. I interpreted it another way when Penelope was married."

"Is the King angry with me?"

The Duke laughed.

"Who could be displeased with you, Miss Dora? On the contrary you have done us a great service. I have discovered that the gold is really gold that glitters."

"We are poor and have no tradition about hidden treasure. I am so sorry I was not able to go to-day. We have been here a long time. But in one way it was a good thing, for it gave Forster another day here. Oh, he is so much better. Mother will be quite delighted when she sees him."

"And it enabled him to see his friend Philip. Do you know that he came back unexpectedly?"

"That is delightful. Where is he? I must see him. He was so good to Forster. He must come and stay with us, he and the Princess."

"They will be charmed, I am sure. But as to his present whereabouts, I do not know. I gave him a rendezvous at twelve o'clock, right at the head of the glen, but he never turned up. I suppose he and Penelope went off together, as is only natural."

Dora again felt an inexpressible desire to jump up and at once to start home, out of this enchanted castle and wood; then, pressing her hand to her head, she laughed at herself.

"I believe I really did get a little crazy last night; I have such odd ideas," she thought.

"But where can Forster be?"

At this moment Forster opened the door, and stood before them. Dora's quick glance revealed to her a Forster she had never seen before. His face was ashy white, and his lips were pressed firmly together. The sight of her, however, appeared to recall him to a more natural state.

"Ah, Dora, you are up! I am so glad. Have you packed up? Because, if so, we might leave here this afternoon."

"What nonsense, my dear fellow; come, sit down and have some luncheon. Where

have you been? Everything is in disorder to-day. The servants have got hold of the story of the discovery and are all in a state of the highest excitement. Where is Philip? And why has not Penelope come in? They are out together, I conclude."

Forster sat down mechanically. Dora, who knew him so well, was utterly dumfounded by his manner and by his look. He might have seen a ghost, she thought, but she was too much dazed herself to speak her thoughts aloud.

"Has Philip been in? I have been looking for him," was all he said.

"Why not spare yourself the trouble? He and Penelope get over the ground in a marvellous way. You have eaten nothing. I sent the servants away because—but this is cold. Shall I ring for something hot?"

Forster shook his head. Then his eyes caught Dora's frightened look, and he made a great effort over himself.

"When you have finished, Dora, go and pack up your things. We can go to-morrow—yes, the first thing to-morrow. I want very much to speak to Philip, so I think I will go out again and find him."

"Come, eat your luncheon. He'll turn up, never fear," said the Duke.

Dora rose and escaped. Something was the matter, very much the matter, with Forster. She did not know what, but she must not trouble him with questions, so creeping upstairs again into her lonely chamber, she gazed out over the desolate fog, and then she forced herself to pack up her belongings. The hours thus wore slowly away, till at last she felt stifled for want of air.

"Oh! I must go out," she said to herself. "I must go out. I can't stay in this place any longer. I must be getting nervous! What will Adela say? I believe I am quite superstitious."

She had got everything ready for departure and looked round to see if she had forgotten anything. The wish to go away had given her strength, and she only longed now to find Forster and to tell him she was quite ready to go. It felt chilly as she stepped out of her room. She put on a thick jacket, feeling that she would rather brave the fog and the damp than stay any longer alone. In the hall the light was fast fading, but the servants had not yet brought any lamps. The front door stood open as usual and the fog had crept up the steps. It was almost impossible to see more than an arm's length in front of one.

"It must have been just such a night

as this when Philip first came here," said Dora to herself. "I remember his account of it so well, and how Jim Oldcorn found him. I wonder where they all are. Forster never goes away without telling me; and Penelope—ah, well, she has her husband. I wonder if she is glad to see him, I—I wonder!"

Dora ran down the steps, determined to find her way up the glen. She knew the path so well that she could hardly lose herself. So she thought, but when she had passed round the house, she could not find the gate leading out of the garden, and suddenly, too, she felt seized with a strange new horror, never before experienced, a horror of she knew not what, unless it was a dread of meeting the King. His face seemed to peer at her from the fog, and when she looked there was nothing, though it seemed to her that just before the face had been there.

She hurried on, groping for the gate, and after five minutes she found it and threw it open. Under the trees the fog appeared denser; it closed her in, but still she walked bravely on. She could breathe here, and felt that the strange feeling of enchantment and mystery was less. She wanted to call Forster, but even here she dared not do it, positively she dared not. She determined that she would go to the end of the path and then return, by that time the rest of the party must have come in. The voice of the Rothery seemed dull and sullen to-day, the usual honest roar was not heard.

Never before had Dora been brought face to face with the mysterious, and she rebelled against it. She felt years older than she had done previous to her meeting with the King, and she seemed to see him perpetually before her, counting over his gold.

"I am glad that we are not rich," she repeated to herself. "Money is a hateful thing. Forster always said so, he has never cared about it. But what can be the matter with him? And where has he gone?"

She bravely walked on and on, now and then nearing the Rothery, and at other times going away from its noise as the road wound round. She could only go very slowly, being afraid of losing her path, but the bank on one side kept her from wandering off in that direction, and she kept close to it.

On she went, having set the gate as her limit. She, too, had a determined will.

She thought she must soon be nearing the end, when something ran close beside her and made her start. It was Nero, who came back, not bounding as usual, but whining with his head down.

"Nero, Nero! Oh! your mistress is not far off; she will know where Forster is. Come, Nero, lead me to her." She had found her voice, and called aloud:

"Princess, Princess, are you there? Where are you?"

The fog was lifting slightly. The end of the wood, thought Dora, must be close at hand. There was the gate, and there was some one leaning against it.

"Princess!" called Dora again, "Princess!"

Then the form moved, and Penelope herself came towards Dora.

"Is it you, child? I am glad. I—I—was waiting here. I did not feel well, I think, but I walked to the gate, and I was waiting."

"Waiting for what? Oh, Princess! how cold your hand is. What is the matter? Why did you not come in to lunch?"

"Is it late, then? I was coming back. Let me lean on your shoulder. Let us go back, for uncle will be wondering at my absence."

"Oh, he said you must be with Mr. Winskell. I wanted Forster. He seemed so—so—strange when he came in."

"Did he find Philip? Tell me, Dora."

"I don't know. Yes, he said something about looking for him. We thought he was with you. Oh, I do hope he won't catch cold in this damp fog. What a horrid day! I suppose you don't mind it, though; do you, dear Princess? I have not seen you since early this morning. I was expecting you."

"Poor Dora, poor little Dora. I am so sorry."

"Oh, of course, you have been busy, but I wanted you to know that I was better. I really could have gone this afternoon, but I suppose Forster thought we should not get far; besides, in this fog it is not safe to drive all those miles to the station. The Duke said so."

"He could not go. He was looking for Philip, I think. Don't say anything more about it, child. We will come in, and everything will be as usual—just as usual."

"Why not? Only you know it is our last evening."

CHAPTER XLII. PUT TO THE TEST.

WHEN the two entered the Palace the fog came right up to its very door. It looked like a thick substance capable of being cut through. Even when the door was shut close, the fog seemed to force an entrance into the dwelling, and partially dimmed the lamp suspended from the ceiling.

The Princess paused, and only then did Dora look up at her.

"Oh, Penelope! What is the matter? Your face is so pale! Did you see a ghost in the glen, or are you ill?"

"I was faint, I think—that's all. Come into the drawing-room."

She took hold of Dora's hand as if she did not want to let her go out of her sight. They passed the first drawing-room, which was not lighted up; in the big drawing-room, now so picturesquely furnished, the servants had already placed a lamp on its bracket, and the tea-table was drawn near the fire. Some great logs flamed up fitfully, and the andirons gleamed as the light fell on them. Though nothing was wanting to the room to make it a place of comfort, this evening it appeared very desolate. In the first place it was empty, and the silence seemed to be a conscious reality.

"There is no one here," said Dora, breaking the stillness. "Dear Princess, do go and lie down; you look really ill—you are worse than I am."

"No, no, it is nothing; I am very strong."

Then suddenly there was a sound of footsteps, and the Duke's voice sounded cheerfully across the first room. His perfect unconsciousness of anything unusual was startling even to Dora, who felt afraid, though she could not explain her own sense of evil foreboding.

"Penelope! Miss Dora! Ah! there you are. I am glad. What, ladies! You two have been out! It is not fit for any one to face this fog."

"We only went up the glen," said Dora, laughing a little nervously.

"Not for a last view of the scenery, Miss Dora. By the way, have you quite recovered from your headache?"

"Oh, yes. I am quite well again."

"So, Penzie, dear, you have had a walk in spite of the fog. Pour out the tea; I wonder the two gentlemen are not indoors. But perhaps they are in the library."

"I don't know," said Penelope absently,

and then she walked to the tea-table and began quietly making tea, whilst Dora seated herself on a low chair near the fire. The Duke alone was as usual, though a trifle more excited, for he could not help thinking of the new discovery, though with Dora present he did not like to refer to it.

"These fogs are very strange; they come down like a thick blanket, and even the oldest inhabitant gets lost. It was on just such a night as this that Philip first discovered the Palace. Do you remember, Princess?"

"Yes, just such a night—Dora, will you put some water into the tea-pot for me?"

"Jim Oldcorn often mentions it. He little thought that the lost stranger would build up the towers again. By the way, where can Philip have gone to?"

"I—I was—I have no idea. Was he not with you?"

"No—but Forster! The two went together, of course. This must seem an insult to Afric's sunny clime. They are hardly gallant to escape from us like this, and it seems to me impossible that they should be out walking for pleasure! After tea Miss Dora and I must find them. I want you in my room, Princess, when you have a few minutes to spare."

Very soon he rose to go. The silence of the ladies became apparent, but certainly the weather was depressing. The Duke was, however, not at all depressed. He had viewed the treasure and his dream of the future was at last realised, not through a stranger, but through a true ancestor of the house of Winskell. He looked back on the long struggle as a man looks back on a hideous nightmare. He felt that he at all events had never despaired, that no adverse circumstance had crushed him, that no difficulty had daunted him. Now nothing but one obstacle lay in the path of honour and glory. Only one, but this was his own brother, the King. That the male line was extinct with them was, of course, a sad fact which nothing could alter, but, on the other hand, Penelope was a representative to be proud of. She was his child, his bringing up, and he was satisfied with the result. He himself was made for a "grand seigneur," every instinct of the race was in him. He had meant to work out his own salvation as well as hers—for in his mind the two had never been separate—and he had done it. They had grown up in close union, and so they would always remain. But the King was a sore hindrance to any grand plans; he had the power of frustrating everything,

just because he was barely responsible, and yet he was not mad enough to be placed under legal restraint. But still he was the head of the family. Without him even this gold could not be used. Sooner or later the difficulty would have to be solved.

Penelope and he must confer together about it. As to her new idea about returning Philip's money, it was preposterous. It was not to be thought of, not for a moment. At times Penelope was a strange girl, but she had always obeyed him, always.

He paced up and down his room, and still his dreams became brighter. The fog outside made no difference to him; the curtains were drawn and the fire burned brightly. His mind had so long been centred on one object, that every other idea had become dwarfed. Now and then there came a vision of one other excitement which had formerly been a joy, and, as he walked on, he even brought back this past happiness to his mind, but, after a few moments' thought, he shook his head, though his lips were parted into a smile.

"It won't do," he said. "It won't do, the risk is too great. Before, it was neck or nothing; now it would be senseless, quite senseless to tempt a kind fate."

There was a knock at the door, and Penelope, a very pale Princess, stood before him.

"I thought I heard you talking to somebody, uncle, but you are alone. You wanted me?"

"Yes, yes, come in, child. I could not talk of it before that young Dora, for her strange experience has frightened her. All's well that ends well."

"You must certainly say nothing before Dora."

"No, no, of course not, but the girl is sharp-witted—a nice girl, very good and simple."

"You wanted me?" repeated Penelope, turning her head away towards the door, as if listening to something she heard outside.

"I want all your attention, child. How are we to persuade your father——"

"To keep the gold, uncle! Oh, to keep it out of sight, anywhere. No, what am I saying?"

"My dear child, what is the matter?"

"Forgive me, dear uncle, I was listening to the sound of footsteps. Some one is coming, there are steps in the hall."

She turned quickly towards the door.

"Well, if the young men are come in they will soon find us out."

The Princess remembered that she must keep calm and appear as usual. She could make a strong effort over herself, and she made it. She stood quite still and turned her face towards her uncle.

"I met Jim Oldcorn just now, and he says that my father managed to get away from him to-day. He was angry about our finding out his secret."

"Ah! of course, he has not enough mind to reason calmly on the subject."

"But you know when he is angry——"

The steps came nearer and nearer, then paused at the door. Penelope could bear it no longer. She flung the door open and Forster stood before them, but Forster changed in such a strange manner, and so covered with mud and dripping with rain-drops, that he was hardly recognisable.

"Mrs. Winakell," he said, and even his voice sounded changed, "I have not found Philip."

"Found Philip!" said the Duke, coming forward and laughing. "My dear Bethune, you don't mean to say you have been looking for Philip or for any one else in this thick fog? Philip has most likely been taken possession of by Oldcorn, though what the two can see in this fog would beat the finest intellect to imagine. When did you last see him?"

"I don't know," said Penelope, answering. "I have been asleep, I think; I lost count of time."

"But you saw him, Bethune. He is very unsociable this first day of his return."

The Duke came towards the door, and looked at Forster with just a shade of displeasure at his strange wild manner and his extremely unkempt appearance.

"I saw him for a moment this morning in the glen. I have been looking for him ever since."

"But why should you? I will go and find Oldcorn. If any one knows where to find him, he will do so."

The Duke passed out of the room with the air of a man who is master, not only of himself, but of all events likely to occur. Since wealth had entered the old Palace the Duke had also entered upon a new phase of life.

Penelope and Forster were left alone in the old wainscoted room. A few hours had changed them. They were like Adam and Eve when the gate of Paradise was shut behind them. One of them could still

cast the blame on another creature, but the other knew that he had fallen from his high estate.

"I don't understand," said Penelope, going towards the fire and seating herself in the great arm-chair, because she felt strangely weak, and did not wish to show any sign of the emotion she had gone through. "Why did you leave me in the glen—and alone?"

"I have been looking for Philip," repeated Forster, sinking down into a chair, without any wish or thought of hiding his excitement.

"What is the use of it all? It is done, but he knew it before."

"It is not too late," said Forster, starting up; "there is a place of—repentance still. You and I, Princess, we must face it, now at once; Philip is a man in ten thousand. I have been false to him, and he believed in me. He called me his master, and I—I—Princess, there is something higher than human love, something—but where can he be? I have been by the lake and along the mountain side; I have called him. Where is he?"

"You forget that—I—that I——" Penelope rose and stood in all her pride and her now pale beauty against the mantelpiece. "I have been sinned against."

"Yes, yes, I know, I see it all. Oh, Princess, if all were changed, if I might have altered everything; but in the eyes of the world I should bring sorrow upon you. I should bring nothing but evil, for sin would follow us."

"When Phillip comes back I will tell him all," she said vehemently, "and then he will judge."

"Philip would set you free, but his great heart would break. He loves you, and I—I love you; but if we did this thing I should hate myself. No, no, there is yet time; listen, my Princess, there is yet time." He came towards her, and took hold of her hands as he continued: "Love is a gift, and yet may be a curse, but duty is higher and grander. We have fallen, both of us; but there is yet time. Philip will forgive us. You have never known him. I never did till too late. Don't let Dora know. I brought her here—I have led all those who love me into the wrong way."

"Forster," she said eagerly, and then the old Dale spirit burst forth. "Forster, love is strongest. I can bear all the world's sneers——"

Forster loosed her hands, and a grey look

of intense agony came over his features. To struggle back to the path of duty does not mean that one can force others to follow.

"Princess, you are noble, and you must be true to yourself. Oh, forgive me, I did not resist the power that drew me here. They think me good and true, and I shall never be able to tell them the truth; never. That is indeed shame."

"You have done nothing," said Penelope, looking up at his drawn face.

"Who made Israel to sin," muttered Forster; then, as if the idea of his guilt scorched him, he said in his low, clear voice: "Penelope, help me!"

That was the first word that touched her. A human soul was crying to her for help in his anguish.

He had seated himself in the chair and hid his face. There was no room left for passion in its earthly sense, the sense of guilt was far greater than passion.

"How can I help you?" she said, and she put her hand on his shoulder. He started up.

"Don't touch me. I want all my strength. Help me to go back, for I feel as if I could never look Philip in the face again."

"You?"

"Yes, I. All this time, ever since that madness in Africa came upon me, I have made light of him, and he—Penelope, he is worthy of the best which life can give him. Help me to make amends, if that is possible."

He took her hand now, and she, being a woman who loved, knew that the touch was altered.

"I will tell Philip everything," she answered, as if that was all she could promise; "and if—if—he thinks best——"

"No, not like that; he has given you everything and the noblest heart. I can see his face now. That look of his haunts me."

"Penelope!" The call came from the Duke. "Where are you? I can't find Oldcorn, he is on the upland; some new sheep-stealing has been going on. Well, I don't doubt that Philip will turn up by dinner-time."

The Duke returned to his easy-chair, and Forster, leaving the two together, walked away. He went straight before him, not heeding what he passed or what he saw, till almost by chance he found himself once more in the drawing-room. Dora had gone away, it was empty and silent, but at

the end of the room there was one window over which no curtain was drawn. The firelight and warmth hurt him, and, mechanically, he hurried away from it till he reached the window. A sudden change had come over the face of nature. A low, moaning wind had arisen, and with angry sighs seemed to pierce the obstinate mist. Here and there it lifted it bodily from the surface of the earth, and it was possible once again to see the blurred outlines of nature.

Forster stood there eagerly looking out, looking only for one form and one face, when suddenly the space clear of fog was darkened by a figure. It came slowly forward, and Forster watched it as if fascinated. Then a face was thrust forward, a face which had already made him shudder. The King's features looked more repellent than usual by being in close proximity to the light, and the expression of mad cunning seemed increased tenfold.

"Come out, come out, I want you."

Forster's first impulse was to obey, but as he mechanically hurried forward to the entrance some other motive made him pause at the hall door. Why should he go to this old man who had only fostered his own evil thoughts? But on the other hand he might have seen Philip, so he hastily opened the big door.

A few paces away the King stood waiting for him.

"Is my girl there?" he asked in a somewhat uncertain tone. "She's so cursed proud there's no dealing with her."

"No," said Forster, "Mrs. Winskell is not there."

"Oh! it's Mrs. Winskell, is it? It was something else in the wood. Eh! Come, you need not be faint-hearted. She can do as others of her race; she can take the law into her own hands. Ay, and she would, too!"

Forster felt inclined to strike the old man down, then, strenuously clenching his fist, he said calmly:

"Have you seen Philip Winskell?"

"No, no; there is no such person as Philip Winskell! The devil take him. No Winskell was ever called Philip."

"Have you seen Philip, my friend?" said Forster angrily.

"Your friend indeed! And you make love to Penelope! Ah! that's a joke. Don't be angry, you fool, the game is yours."

Then Forster turned on his heel and left the King alone.

THE BALTIC SHIP CANAL.

THE wedding of the North Sea with the Baltic is to take place, if all goes well, at the beginning of 1895, and even now small sailing-vessels are using the connecting waterway. One is constrained to wonder what old Neckan will think of the innovation, he of whom Matthew Arnold sings:

In summer on the headlands
The Baltic Sea along,
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
And sings his plaintive song.

It is a song of earth, not of ocean, and it is a tale of earth removed to the extent of a bewildering number of cubic metres, that he will have to tell his wife and children crouching "beneath the headlands" where "green rolls the Baltic Sea." The song of Neckan to his marine bride is ever of his earthly bridal, during that brief space he enjoyed when far from the kind sea-wave. And now he may sing of another earthly bridal—the junction of two seas by a link out through the German land, which once was Danish.

The inception of the scheme, too, on which the Fatherland is now priding itself was Danish. Upwards of one hundred years ago, King Christian the Seventh of Denmark constructed the Eider Canal, from Holtenu, in the Baltic harbour of Kiel, to Rendsburg on the Eider. This Canal is still in use, although it has numerous locks and only about nine or ten feet of water; but it is, of course, far behind the requirements of the present day. So, some seven years ago the German Reichstag determined to improve on King Christian's scheme, and in doing so to avoid both the dangers of the voyage round the North of Denmark, and the burden of the tolls levied by Denmark on vessels passing Elsinore.

The German design, however, was not based literally on the old Danish line. The North Sea terminus was fixed at Brunsbüttel, on the long, dreary stretch of flat and marshy land that one sees away to the north on entering the wide mouth of the Elbe. Starting from Brunsbüttel, the Canal cuts through this low, marshy ground until it reaches the Lake of Kuden, then traverses the watershed between the Elbe and the Eider to Grünenthal, enters the Eider at a place called Schülpe, and passing through Rendsburg reaches the old Eider Canal of King Christian. The course of this old waterway is there utilised, but it is

being straightened, deepened, and widened, right up to the Bay or Harbour of Kiel, which is the Baltic terminus.

A glance at a good map will easily show the course of this newest of artificial waterways, which for nearly seven years the German Empire has been cutting through that land of old contentions and bitter memories, Schleswig-Holstein. It is but some sixty-one or sixty-two miles long, yet will cost at least ten millions sterling. The last bill of costs we saw was up to October, 1892, and the outlay till then was some five million eight hundred thousand pounds, while other two millions were then computed to finish the channel—a total of, say, one hundred and fifty-six and a half million marks. But estimates of such great works are, as we know, always exceeded, and numerous works have been deemed necessary in addition to the Canal.

Thus, at Grünenthal a great high-level bridge has been constructed to carry the railway over the Canal. Another high-level bridge at Levensau will cost about a quarter of a million sterling. At Kiel the harbour and quay accommodation is to be greatly extended, and in preparation of the expansion of trade which is hoped for, Stettin is spending some half million in enlarging and improving her harbour. On the North Sea, Bremen is spending a million and a half in deepening the Weser, and on other works, and a new deep harbour is being built at Cuxhaven at the mouth of the Elbe, but whether in aid or in rivalry of the Canal harbour of Brunsbüttel is not very clear.

Of other projects set agoing by the Baltic and North Sea Canal, we hear of one for enlarging the Canal between the Trave and the Elbe already begun; and another to connect Königsberg with Pillau on the Gulf of Dantzic, but these do not concern us just now.

The old Trave and Elbe Canal, by the way, is the first Canal in which locks were used. It is interesting to recall this fact, for the new Elbe and Kiel Canal is to have no locks except one at each extremity, to maintain the level of the water in the Canal independently of the variations of the tides in the two seas which it connects. The Brunsbüttel lock it is intended to open for three or four hours a day during ebb-tide, while the Holtenau (Kiel) lock need only be closed during the spring tides, or during the prevalence of certain winds. These locks are, therefore, rather guards and regulators than elevators—as canal locks may be regarded.

The old Steckenitz Canal, between the Trave and the Elbe, was constructed by the Lübeckers, who found it so good for their trade that they made a still bigger Canal to connect their town with the pride of the Hamburgers, the Alster. This aroused the jealousy of the Hamburgers, who actually succeeded in compelling the Lübeckers to fill up the ditch again. This, of course, was in the proud old days of the Free Cities, when right was pretty much regulated by the might of the dollar.

And perhaps if Hamburg had her will, this Baltic and North Sea Canal would never have been constructed, for it certainly threatens the paramount position of Hamburg as the great entrepôt of German foreign and colonial trade. But it was not commercial considerations that determined the construction of the work. For the impulse we must go back to what Moltke said years ago—that in the event of a naval war, Germany would have to begin by securing herself against the interference of her neighbours.

At present the two sea-boards of Germany are separated by the peninsula of Denmark. From the mouth of the Elbe round Denmark to Kiel is a voyage of about two days by steamer. By Canal it will be only about fifteen hours.

In effect, then, the Canal is designed to overcome the one great obstacle in the path of Germany as a great naval power—to wit, Denmark. That obstacle has been overcome by engineering skill in preference to unprovoked war, and for this mankind may be grateful. Whether it will tend to the future peace of the world that the two great naval dockyards of Germany—Kiel and Wilhelmshaven—should be brought within a few hours' journey of each other, is not a question for discussion here. It has been said that had the Canal been put forward as a purely commercial project, the capital would never have been forthcoming, except from Prussia, for whose vessels alone it will be profitable. But to a project for the security and honour of the Fatherland, the several members of the Empire could not refuse to contribute a fair share; and when the Emperor William the Second inaugurated the work in June, 1887, he declared it to be "for the honour of Germany, and for the good, the greatness, and the strength of the Empire."

To carry out this design, the Canal, for some sixty-one miles, will have a depth of water sufficient for the largest vessels in the German navy, which draw some fifty-three

or fifty-four feet. For safe passage there must be three or four feet of water between the keel of such vessels and the bed of the waterway, which will be seventy feet wide—about the same as the Suez Canal—and have alightly sloping sides. The slope and the friable character of the material on the banks have both been adversely commented on by engineering critics, some of whom declare that not enough allowance has been made for the tremendous “wash” that must accompany a huge ironclad steaming in such a comparatively narrow channel.

Some of the engineering aspects may now be briefly referred to.

Beginning at the Brunsbüttel—North Sea—end, the great difficulty was not in cutting through the marshy soil, but in building up the sustaining banks firm enough. To effect this the sandy soil excavated from the Grünenthal section had to be brought over. Then, about half-way, the watershed between the Baltic and the North Sea is reached, where, at Grünenthal, a great trench one hundred and forty feet had to be cut, and a bridge had to be built to carry the Holstein railway over the highest-masted vessel that could pass along.

Perhaps the most formidable difficulty encountered by the engineers was the Flemhude See—one of a series of natural lakes which have otherwise been utilised as basins and passing-places in the general line of the Canal. The Flemhude See, however, is some twenty-two feet above the level of the Canal, and the choice lay between draining and damming the lake. As to drain it meant to render barren a large surrounding tract of country, it was determined to cut it off by means of a huge dam. This, however, necessitated a deviation of the River Eider, for which an artificial channel had to be cut on the outer side of the dam, and a very curious thing in engineering is the result. At this point, for a considerable distance, a fresh-water canal runs parallel with the sea-canal, but about twenty feet above it and practically overhanging it. This is probably one of the most ingenious parts of the work, but there are some who say it is also the weakest, and who predict dreadful things if the huge dam should ever give way.

As the Baltic is approached, the old line of the Eider Canal is followed. This was a very devious line, and although it has been straightened a good deal, yet the curves are still considerable, and will necessitate extreme caution in the navigation of long warships and ocean-liners. Indeed, it is

probable that the windings of this part of the Canal will necessitate the widening of the bed at no very distant day.

The Canal, as we have said, has no locks on its course, but only at its extremities. These, however, have added very materially to the cost of the undertaking. In the first place, the effect of the spring tides had to be guarded against—and what that means may be to some extent inferred from the statement that during these tides the water will sometimes rise fifteen feet above and sink ten feet below the ordinary levels, an extreme difference of, say, twenty-five feet. Then at the Baltic end, although there is little rise or fall of tide, the effect of the wind on the sea-level is very marked. If the wind blows from the east, the water in the Bay of Kiel will rise eight feet, and if from the west, it may fall to the same extent. Now, a full spring-tide, with a rise of fifteen feet at Brunsbüttel, concurring with a strong west wind at Holtenau, might at a given moment cause a difference of twenty-three feet in the height of water between the two places. Of course, this is the possible extreme, but without that extreme the frequent differences must have caused a current so rapid in so narrow a channel as to be dangerous to navigation. Therefore a lock has been built at each end on concrete blocks, each lock five hundred feet long by eighty-three feet wide, and therefore capable of taking in the largest vessel afloat.

Apart from the naval requirements of the German Empire—and the Canal, as we have said, will bring the two great Imperial dockyards within a few hours' steaming of each other—what are the potential advantages of the new waterway?

The avoidance of the danger and the saving of the time involved in the voyage of steamers round Cape Skagen and through the Sound or the Greater and Lesser Belt, is one. Roughly speaking, this circuit means about forty hours for steamers, and three or four days for sailers, whereas the passage through the Canal is expected to occupy not more than fifteen hours, under steam. About forty-five thousand vessels at present double Cape Skagen every year, and the Germans hope and expect that more than half of these will find it profitable to use the Canal; but that, we imagine, will depend largely on the dues to be imposed, and the expedition afforded. The saving of time will not be the only attraction, for according to German statistics, ninety-two German vessels have been

wrecked on the Danish coasts within five years, and with a loss of over seven hundred lives. Between 1858 and 1891, it is said, the record of wrecks on these coasts numbered over eight thousand, or about two hundred and fifty a year, or five a week! The figures seem incredible, and we are unable to vouch for them; but they have been authoritatively stated.

As to the saving of time by avoiding the circumnavigation of Denmark, that, of course, will largely depend on the point of departure. For German vessels sailing from North Sea ports it will naturally be very great, and German coalowners expect that the Canal will give them the supply of the Baltic ports with coal, which at present they derive from England and Scotland. German coal will, no doubt, have an opportunity of competition in the Baltic, but questions of price and quality will determine the result more than transport facilities.

Vessels from the English Channel bound for the Baltic, and from the coast of France, will find an advantage in the Canal; but vessels from the north-east coast of England, and from Scotland, will derive no benefit. Hull ships might gain a trifle in time, although hardly enough to compensate for Canal dues; but Sunderland, Newcastle, Leith, Aberdeen, and Dundee ships would gain nothing. And it is from these ports that the greater portion of the British trade with the Baltic is conducted.

On this point a recent report of the British Consul at Copenhagen is of interest. He sets forth the Danish opinion that the Canal is being constructed for military purposes, and that the commercial importance of it is mythical. As against the dangers of the Cape Skagen route are cited the dangers of navigation in the Elbe during the winter months, and the frequent obstruction through ice. The Elbe difficulties, it is said, recur every year, whereas it is seldom that both the Sound and the Great Belt are closed simultaneously by ice. Between 1871 and 1891 the Sound was only closed during two winters. It was closed again in the severe winter of 1892-93, but Kiel was frozen up at the same time. Then it is protested that the dangers of the Skaw route are very much exaggerated.

As to the question of distance saved, say between Dover and the island of Bornholm, which the Germans estimate at two hundred miles, by using the Canal instead of the Skaw route, a Danish critic thus comments:

"This converted into time, at a speed of from nine to ten miles an hour, shows a saving of about twenty hours, from which, however, has to be deducted nine to ten hours caused by using the Canal at reduced speed, the result being that from the most southerly point, Dover—under circumstances so favourable as to be hardly ever realised—there is a saving of about ten hours by using the Canal. From the east coast of England, West Hartlepool, Newcastle, Sunderland, from which ports a very considerable part of the coal for the Baltic is exported, a German authority finds the voyage shortened by ninety miles, whereas—on the same calculation—no saving is effected by going through the Canal; on the contrary, the saving is in favour of the old route. Moreover, from Scotch ports, say Methil, Grangemouth, Burntisland, and Leith, from which the voyage is supposed to be forty miles shorter, and with Moën for a terminus even eighty-three miles, the saving by going north of the Skaw is very considerable. It is evident that this must be the case as regards ships passing north of Scotland."

This is the Danish view, and, of course, the Danes are naturally prejudiced against the Canal, but it is our duty to present both sides of the question to our readers. On the whole the Danes seem to us to have the best of the argument, and it is said they are about to spend a million sterling in improving and extending the harbour of Copenhagen.

As regards Copenhagen, vessels drawing over thirty feet of water can now enter, free, at any hour of the day almost the whole year round, whereas Hamburg is seventy miles from the mouth of the Elbe, and Bremen fifty-six miles from the mouth of the Weser, both of which rivers are impassable during one half of the day—on account of the tide—and are subject to frequent ice obstructions.

The commercial value, then, of the Baltic and North Sea Canal—except to Germany herself—is somewhat problematical. And as for Germany herself, it is doubtful if the commercial advantages to be derived will compensate for an outlay of ten millions on the Canal, but then with her the dominating consideration has been a military, or rather a naval one. But the work is a great engineering feat, which has aroused a great amount of enthusiasm in the Fatherland, which is being watched with interest by engineers, shipowners, and merchants everywhere, and which is so rapidly approaching

completion, that the formal opening early in 1895 is confidently expected. At any rate, the works have given constant employment to some five or six thousand men, and have caused the circulation of a large amount of money.

THE MAGNOLIA.

THE great magnolia glimmered in the dusk,
The honeysuckle twined its fragrant leaves,
The bat went flitting by the window eaves,
The chestnut pattered from its opening husk.
The long low thunder of the ebbing tide
Rose through the tamarisks that fringed the cliff,
And the white sail of a belated skiff
Glided athwart the sea line vague and wide.
The great magnolia's heavy perfume crept
Through the still room; the darkness deepened
down,
The lights went out where lay the fishing town,
And grief and joy together paused and slept.
And from the mountain range's mighty head,
Rose the young moon and silvered half the sea;
"And does my darling wake to think of me!"
To the magnolia's great white blooms I said.

TWO BLACK BAGS.

A COMPLETE STORY.

As I often say to my wife, when she blames me for forgetting her little commissions, it's a queer thing, is the mind, and great is the force of habit. I never forget to do anything I'm in the habit of doing, but, as Tilly usually attends to the shopping herself, I'm not in the habit of calling at the butcher's or the grocer's on my way home from business, and, therefore—well, therefore I don't call three times out of five that she tells me to.

Don't I catch it? No; not over much, anyhow. For one thing we haven't been married very long, and Tilly agrees that it's only reasonable I should have time to learn to be more careful, and, for another, if it wasn't for the hold a habit has on me, I doubt whether we should be married yet, or at least we shouldn't be living in our own house with the furniture all bought at a large discount for cash.

I am a clerk in the service of a firm of colliery and quarry owners at Lington, and every Saturday morning I go out to Westerby, a village some thirty miles off among the moors, to pay the quarrymen there their wages.

It's an awkward sort of journey. I have to start by the first train in the morning, which leaves Lington at six, change at Drask, our junction with the main line, leave the main line again at Thurley, some

ten miles further south, and do the rest of the distance in the brake van of a mineral train.

The money—nearly a hundred pounds, mostly in silver—I always carry in a little black leather bag, one of those bags you see by scores every day, which may contain anything from a packet of sandwiches and a clean collar to a dynamite bomb, and it's my habit, when in the train, to put my bag on the rack facing me. I rarely keep it on the seat by my side, and I don't like to put it up over my head.

If it has to go there because the opposite rack is full I am always uneasy about it, fancying I shall forget it when I get out. I never have forgotten it yet, but one Saturday in November, 1893, I did something which might have been worse. I took the wrong bag when I left the train at Thurley.

It happened in this way. On the Friday night I went with Tilly to a party which broke up so late that I had only just time to change my clothes and get a sort of apology for a breakfast before catching my train. Consequently I slept all the way from Lington to Drask, and at Drask I stumbled, only half awake, into the first third class compartment I came to.

Three of the corner seats were occupied, and I took the fourth, though there was no room on the opposite rack for my bag. I couldn't put it on the seat at my side either, because the man in the other corner had his legs up and I didn't care to disturb him. I ought, of course, to have kept it on my knees, and on any other morning I dare say I should have done so, but it was rather heavy and I was very sleepy, so I just slung it up over my head, settled myself down, and dropped off again almost before the train was clear of the station.

I didn't wake until we stopped at Thurley, and even then I fancy I should have slept on if the two men at the far end of the compartment had not wanted to get out.

"What station is this?" I asked, sitting up and drawing my legs from across the door to let them pass. "Otterford, I suppose!"

"No. Thurley," said one, and up I jumped in a hurry, took my bag, as I thought, from the rack opposite to me, and got down on to the platform just as the guard whistled the train away.

"You ran it a bit fine that time, mister," remarked the man who had saved me from being carried past my destination. "I wonder if that other chap meant going on? He was as fast asleep as you."

"Oh, he's all right," said his companion. "He's booked for London. I heard him say so when he got in. Good morning, governor."

"Good morning," I replied, and then, having thanked them for waking me, I made for the siding where my mineral train was waiting for me.

"You look tired this morning, Mr. Corner," said the brakesman as soon as we started on our somewhat slow and wearisome journey.

"I look what I feel, Jim," said I. "And I am as sleepy as an owl. I never went to bed last night."

"Then lie down and have a sleep now, sir," suggested Jim. "Here's some sacks and a rug to cover you. If the jolting don't wake you, you may be sure I won't."

The good-natured fellow kept his word, and as I am one of those happily-constituted individuals who can sleep on or through anything, I felt much refreshed when we arrived at the Quarries after what Jim called "a roughish passage" over the uneven surface of the moorland line, which had been laid solely to serve the needs of our quarries and some neighbouring iron mines.

After I had had a wash and done full justice to a second breakfast at the "Miners' Arms," I felt ready to face my morning's work of making up the men's pay-sheets. While I was doing that the bag, which I fondly imagined to be mine, lay on the table before me, nor did any doubt as to its identity trouble me until I had finished my calculations and was ready to embody the results of them in sundry little heaps of gold and silver.

Then, as I felt in my pocket for my keys, my memory began to entertain a vague suspicion that that bag was somehow unfamiliar to it. I am by no means an observant man, and as I couldn't have set down categorically the characteristics which distinguished my bag from others of like make and shape, I felt rather than thought that the one in front of me did not possess those characteristics.

However, my key fitted the lock, and as I turned it, my suspicions vanished, but only to be replaced a moment later by an astounding certainty.

Instead of resting upon the familiar brown-paper packages of silver and little canvas bags of gold, my eyes were dazzled by a many-coloured iridescence which shone forth from the inside of that bag as soon as I opened it.

"Diamonds, by Jingo!" I cried as I started back amazed.

The bag fell over on its side, and half-a-dozen loose stones rolled out upon the table, where they lay sparkling gloriously in the wintry sunshine.

As soon as I recovered my self-possession I picked them up and put them back into the bag, the contents of which I then examined as well as I could without exposing them to the view of any one who might happen to look in at the office-window, for, though I had no reason to suppose the quarrymen were not honest, I thought it best to keep my discovery to myself.

The bag, I guessed, was probably the property of a jeweller's traveller; a traveller in a large way of business, too, thought I, as I peered into it in the least exposed corner of the office, and found it almost full of what, little as I know about precious stones, I felt certain were valuable jewels.

But surely travellers in jewellery did not usually pack, or rather omit to pack, their samples in such an utterly careless fashion? Rings, brooches, bracelets, loose stones, at least one necklace, a gold watch and chain, some bank notes, and a considerable sum in sovereigns, were all mixed up together in a chaotic confusion which seemed at least inconsistent with business habits.

I began to doubt whether it was even consistent with honest possession of, at all events, the contents of the bag on the part of my late fellow passenger—the man who was booked for London, and who had been asleep when I left the train at Thurley.

No doubt he was awake, and also aware of his loss by this time. What a state of mind he must be in, too—but, just as I was trying to realise his state of mind, a murmur of gruff voices, and a shuffling of heavy feet in the yard outside reminded me that it was time to pay the men.

What had I better do, I wondered? Borrow what I needed from the notes and gold in the bag that was not mine, or put the men off with fair words till Monday? They were a rough lot, though, and if I adopted the latter alternative there would probably be something very like a riot. It would be wiser, I thought, to pay them if I could get enough change to do it.

Hurriedly summoning the foreman and telling him that a mistake had been made in supplying me with money, I went down into the village, and, after some trouble, succeeded in collecting enough silver and copper to serve my purpose.

Then, with that precious bag out of sight between my feet, I paid the men, who were already grumbling at the delay, at the same time doing my best to rally them into a better humour, for I felt absurdly nervous, and was ready to credit the honest fellows with a capacity for crimes which were no doubt quite beyond the compass even of their imaginations.

As soon as I had finished my task I returned, per mineral train, to Thurley, and there I broke my journey. On calmly reviewing all the circumstances of the case in the seclusion of the brake-van, I had decided that the police, rather than the railway authorities, ought to be first informed of my mistake, and the inspector to whom I told my story agreed with me.

"I am very glad you came straight to me," said he, turning the contents of the bag out on his desk. "If you can hold your tongue for a week or two, it's just possible we may catch the gentleman who put this nice little lot together."

"You think they have been stolen, then," I asked.

"Think!" he repeated, smiling at my simplicity. "I know, my boy. And when and where, too—though unfortunately not by whom. Run your eye over this."

"This" was a list of jewels and other valuables missing from Erlingthorpe, Lord Yerbury's place near Drialingden, where, the inspector said, a well-planned robbery had been carried out on the Thursday evening.

"You seem to have nailed the lot," he went on; "but we may as well go through the articles seriatim."

We did so, and found there was nothing missing, except the money I had taken to pay the men.

"Our unknown friend hasn't even paid his travelling expenses out of the loose cash," commented the inspector, and then he suddenly changed his tone.

"Now, look here, young man," he went on, eyeing me keenly, "I'm not in charge of this case—yet—but if you'll do as I tell you, I hope I may be in the course of a few days. There's a tidy reward offered for the recovery of the property, as you see. That, I take it, you've earned already; but are you game to help me catch the man? There's a further reward for nabbing him, which, of course, I can't touch—officially—and don't particularly want. My aim is promotion. Do you understand?"

"I think so," said I; "and I am willing to help you all I can."

"Good," said the inspector, resuming his jocular manner. "Could you identify your fellow-sleeper, do you think?"

"I'm afraid not," I replied. "He had a beard, I know——"

"Which was very likely false," interrupted he; "but never mind. What we want to do is to get our friend to claim the property either in person or by deputy. He's sure to be a bit backward in coming forward, but he won't like to give up all that for the little bit of ready money there was in your bag, and if we have patience we may draw him."

"Well, what do you want me to do?" I asked.

"Nothing," he replied; "just literally nothing. Go home. Keep a still tongue in your head, and a sharp eye on the agony columns of the London papers, and wait till you hear from me. I'll take charge of these articles, and give you a receipt for them, but don't be surprised if you see them still advertised as missing."

A few days later the inspector set his trap. It took the shape of an advertisement which appeared in the—but no; perhaps I had better not give the name of the paper; according to Inspector Bland, it is the favourite journal of the criminal classes—begging the gentleman with whom "G. C." inadvertently exchanged bags to communicate with G. C. at the address he would find in G. C.'s pocket-book.

Personally, I didn't think our fish would be foolish enough to rise to this bait, but my friend the inspector was more hopeful.

"Luckily for us, Mr. Corner," said he, when I took advantage of my next visit to the quarries to call upon him, "there's always a sort of warp or twist in the mind of the habitual criminal which prevents him from believing in the honesty of other folks. Now, not a soul but you and I and the chief constable knows those jewels are as good as back on Lady Yerbury's dressing-table, or wherever else she's in the habit of leaving 'em lying about. Therefore the hue and cry after them's not likely to die away yet awhile, and there'll be a genuine ring about it which should persuade our unknown friend that you've got 'em and mean to convert 'em to your own use, as we say in the profession, but, being an amateur, don't know how to go about turning 'em into more cash than the reward comes to, and that, consequently, you are anxious to come to terms with him. See?"

I saw, but I was not convinced. Events, however, proved that the inspector was

right. For a month Lady Yerbury's diamonds were sought in vain, and for a month "G. C." continued to appeal to his late fellow traveller, also in vain, but at the end of that time his patience was rewarded by the appearance of an advertisement, telling him, if he really meant business, to write to "B. H." at a given address.

The letter I wrote at the dictation of Inspector Bland was more cautious than incriminating, but as it produced a reply which the inspector deemed satisfactory, it was followed by others less carefully worded, until at last I stood pledged to personally deliver, for a consideration of two thousand pounds, the stolen jewels to one Benjamin Hurst, whom I was to meet at a public-house in Chillingham.

Now, I don't pretend to be braver than the average man of peaceful and sedentary habits, and when I saw what sort of a house the "Spotted Dog" was, I began to wish I had refused to have anything to do with Inspector Bland's scheme.

The little company of disreputable-looking loafers hanging about the bar eyed me curiously as I entered, and when I asked the landlord if Mr. Hurst was in, one of them raised a general laugh by offering to carry my luggage up to him.

"No larks, Bill," said the landlord sternly. "Mary, show the gentleman Mr. Hurst's room."

I found Mr. Hurst a decidedly surly rascal. He began by grumbling at the hardness of the bargain I was driving with him, and swearing at his luck generally. Then, being perhaps emboldened by the conciliatory manner I thought it prudent to adopt, he tried to make better terms, offering me first five hundred pounds less, and finally insisting that he ought at least to be allowed to deduct from my two thousand pounds the sum I had used to pay the men.

Inspector Bland had allowed me a quarter of an hour for negotiations. At the end of that time he proposed to make a raid upon the house.

"And mind," he had said in his jocular way, "we don't find the property still in your hands, Mr. Corner. It would be a pretty kettle of fish if we had to prosecute you for unlawful possession, wouldn't it?"

In accordance with these instructions I haggled with Mr. Hurst a little while, and then allowed him to have his way, whereupon he, having satisfied himself that the bag which I restored to him still contained his spoils, handed me one thousand nine

hundred pounds in what afterwards turned out to be very creditable imitations of Bank of England notes.

"I suppose you don't want no receipt!" he growled.

"No, thank you," said I; "I think we may mutually dispense with that formality. Good morning."

I turned to leave the room as I spoke, but before I could unlock the door, it was burst open from the outside, not, unfortunately for me, by the police, but by the man whom the landlord had called Bill, a powerful ruffian, who promptly knocked me down and knelt upon my chest.

"Quick, Ben, get out of this," he cried. "It's a plant. No, no. The window, you fool," he added, as Mr. Hurst, bag in hand, made for the door. "The police are in the bar already."

As Mr. Hurst opened the window, he cursed me with much volubility and bitterness, and as soon as he was outside on the leads he did worse.

"Stand clear, Bill," he cried, and his friend obeyed him. I scrambled to my feet, but immediately dropped again with a bullet from Mr. Hurst's revolver in my shoulder.

I am not at all sorry that Mr. Hurst fired at me—as Inspector Bland says, it was much easier to convict him of attempted murder than to prove he actually stole those jewels, and the inspector doubts, too, whether he would have got fifteen years if merely charged with receiving them. But I do wish he hadn't hit me.

However, even the pain my wound still gives me is not without its compensation. It prevents me from feeling any twinges of conscience when I reflect that my furniture cost Mr. Hurst his liberty, for Lord Yerbury took it for granted that he was the thief, and paid me the extra reward he had offered for his apprehension.

Inspector Bland won the promotion he coveted, and is now stationed at Lington. His wedding present was characteristic. It was a black bag, with my initials on either side in white letters about six inches long.

DR. MEREDITH'S ASSISTANT.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "*The Thirteenth Brydaine*," "*Catherine Maidment's Burden*," "*Benet of Clergy*," "*The Vicar's Aunt*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IX.

IF Mrs. French had had cause, four weeks earlier, to commend Dr. Godfrey for keeping himself to himself, that cause might have

been said, during the week that followed Mrs. Johnson's tea-party, to be doubled. For never, since Dr. Godfrey's first arrival, had the Mary Combe people come so little in contact with the slight grey-clad figure. It was not that it was invisible; on the contrary, it was to be seen up and down the street a dozen times a day as usual; but Dr. Godfrey's manner was at once abstracted and concentrated; abstracted apparently from Mary Combe scenes and interests altogether, and concentrated on something wholly different. The passing greetings received from "the young doctor" were not less cordial exactly, but they had lost all the life and light which had given them such attractiveness, and they were always more or less hurried.

It was understood that both Dr. Meredith and his assistant were very busy; and further, that all their leisure and thought were probably absorbed in anxious consultation over details of their daily work.

As regards the latter theory nothing could have been much further from the truth. During the whole course of that week Dr. Meredith and his assistant had only actually met once, and that was when, by the merest misunderstanding, they had simultaneously visited the same case—one of Mrs. Allen's children. Whether it was by definite intention or not, it so happened that even the slight daily contact between his assistant and Dr. Meredith was avoided by the latter. All their necessary professional intercourse was managed, in one way and another, by deputy. The briefest of notes, sent down to Dr. Meredith's house, procured Dr. Godfrey what was needed in the way of daily directions; her prescriptions were sent to Alfred Johnson, to be conveyed through him to the surgery; and any doubts and difficulties she had were decided by her for herself, without the aid of any of the books she had sometimes borrowed from Dr. Meredith's medical library. It could scarcely have been any lack of definite intention, however, that made her, one day when she had intended to make a short cut over the common, turn back abruptly on seeing Dr. Meredith at the opposite end of it. And on the one occasion during that week when he called at the Johnsons' house to speak to her, she had sent out a polite but conclusive message to the effect that she was engaged and could not then see him—she was engaged only in perfectly unimportant letter-writing—and would be

much obliged if he would call in the evening. He did call in the evening, but only to learn that Dr. Godfrey was out; unexpectedly detained, Mrs. Johnson said.

So much for the facts of the case as to the two doctors' constant intercourse.

As regards the first idea; namely, that there was plenty of work for the two; Mary Combe was not so wrong in its belief.

The weather, which had suddenly become unnaturally cold and wet for early June, seemed to favour the spread of an outbreak of measles, which crept about among the children so rapidly as to oblige the closing of the school. And the chilly damp seemed to affect the old people, too; there was a great deal of asthma and bronchitis. There were also two or three bad accidents about this time, and several chronic cases of serious illness needing much attention for the moment; among them Mrs. Wilson, whom Althea never failed to see and soothe every day. Altogether, Mary Combe had seldom known what old Peters, the parish clerk, characterised as "such a ailin' haytime."

It was further rumoured in the village that Miss Rose Swinton at Stoke Vere was very ill—"lying between living and dying," the report said—and that Dr. Meredith spent more and more of his time at Stoke Vere with each successive day; and also that after every occasion on which he had been known to be at Stoke Vere Rectory he had returned looking harassed, oppressed, and keenly anxious.

Althea Godfrey had been the recipient of several enquiries for Miss Swinton when she came in to her rooms for a cup of tea at four o'clock on a cold afternoon at the end of the week. The questioners, even though Dr. Godfrey had met them with a qualified confession of ignorance, had been somewhat persistent, and possibly it was the weariness of this repetition, added to the personal fatigue attendant on a long, hard day's work, that gave her face the sort of pinched, wan look it wore.

She had set down her cup, empty, before she discovered, half hidden under the edge of the gigantic tray which Mrs. Johnson thought a necessary adjunct of tea, a note addressed to "Dr. Godfrey."

"From the Vicar," said Mrs. Johnson, hovering in, ostensibly with the hot water, but really to make the announcement. "His man brought it, sir; and he'll call on

his way back from Davidson's farm to see if there's an answer, sir."

Mr. Howard had been away from Mary Combe for the past three weeks; almost, in fact, ever since Dr. Godfrey's arrival. He always took his holiday early in the year. Being a bachelor, he had no one but himself to consult, and he liked to "get it off his mind, and settle down," he was wont to explain, with a sigh of relief, when he came back. This very original way of regarding a holiday was characteristic of the man, and it was possibly this originality that had attracted Dr. Meredith to Mr. Howard. From whatever reason, the two were very good friends, and whenever Mr. Howard could find a free evening, he was very wont to stroll down to Dr. Meredith's house and spend an hour.

Before his departure he had called, duly, on Dr. Meredith's assistant, but "the young doctor" had been out.

The note which Althea opened and read, while Mrs. Johnson placed the hot-water jug in a dozen tentative positions, was a brief, cordially-worded request that Dr. Godfrey would waive ceremony, and come up to the Rectory that evening for "a quiet smoke."

Althea twisted the note round and round hesitatingly. Her hesitation was wholly unconnected with her anomalous position. She had from the first accepted that position with a fearless facing of all its attendant difficulties. She had come to Mary Combe as "Dr. Godfrey," well realising what she was undertaking. Mrs. Johnson watched her lodger enquiringly for a few moments, and then, seeing that there was evidently no hope of any information, went reluctantly away, unnoticed by Althea.

At length she gave a little weary sigh, wearily walked across the room to her writing materials, and sat down to write her answer. She wrote the date, and "Dear Mr. Howard" after it. Then she stopped short, threw down her pen with a reckless disregard for Mrs. Johnson's table-cloth, and pushed her short hair back from her brow with an impulsive movement that seemed to speak of an altered point of view. She sat staring at the opposite wall for some moments, with wide, doubtful grey eyes.

"I'll go," she said at length, in a low voice, to herself; "after all, anything's better than time to think."

Five hours later the grey-clad figure was comfortably established in a long

basket-chair in Mr. Howard's library. "Library" was its courtesy title; but as a matter of fact all his books were in another room, and this was neither more nor less than a smoking-room. It had received its dignified name at the hands of his servants, Mr. Howard explained half apologetically.

"I suppose," he said, with a smile, "they didn't think a smoking-room a clerical possession. But I'm afraid all their good intentions won't make this a clerical room."

He glanced round, with a little twitch in the corners of his eyes and mouth, as he spoke, and Dr. Godfrey involuntarily followed his example. The two were seated one on each side of a rather wide fireplace, in which a little crackling fire was a very welcome sight on this unnaturally cold, wet evening. Immediately opposite to them was a bookcase, it is true, but only its upper shelves contained their proper contents. The lower were the receptacle of a neatly arranged stock of fishing-tackle and odds and ends. Against the wall at right angles was a small turning-lathe, and opposite to that, again, a table which was covered half with newspapers, half with a pile of library books waiting to be mended.

"The boys are chiefly responsible for that!" he said, indicating the latter. "They drop in here if they care to on three evenings of the week, and I found it difficult to entertain them; the lathe has been a godsend!"

Mr. Howard's face was a pleasant one always, and perhaps doubly so when he smiled.

"I should think the 'dropping in' itself was not a godsend!" responded Dr. Godfrey with something like a responsive smile, and a faint but decided lessening of the wan weariness. "It's very good of you."

"I don't see it," was the quick answer. "If you come to that, it's very good of you and Meredith to work yourselves as you do; it's all the same idea! By the way," Mr. Howard turned his head so as to catch sight of the mantelpiece clock, "Meredith said he'd look in to-night, and he's very late. Did he say anything to you as to when he should turn up?"

Althea Godfrey had been idly scrutinising the fire during Mr. Howard's disclaimer. But as he alluded to Dr. Meredith's intentions, she turned sharply away from it, lifting her head with a quick, surprised gesture. All the wan weariness had

asserted itself again, and on it two tiny flushes of bright colour showed themselves with curious incongruity of effect.

"Is Dr. Meredith to be here to-night?"

She spoke in a strained voice, whose tones might have struck Mr. Howard as singular had he known her voice well enough to discriminate. But as he did not, he merely thought to himself that Dr. Godfrey was somewhat abrupt in manner, and possibly inclined to be aggrieved at having been kept in the dark about Dr. Meredith's movements.

"Yes. I asked him this morning to come. Didn't he mention it to you? Ah, there he is!"

It was a ring at the front-door bell which had given rise to Mr. Howard's assertion, and without waiting for any answer he rose, with a word of apology, and went out to let his guest in himself. Another instant and there was a cheery sound of greeting in the hall. At the sound of the fresh voice that shared in it, Althea Godfrey's white face became curiously hard and set, and as the little flow of conversation that succeeded the greeting drew nearer to the library door, her lips compressed themselves so tightly, that when Mr. Howard threw the door open in hospitable welcome, they had become one thin red line.

"Go in!" he exclaimed heartily; "go in, Meredith! I don't suppose I need introduce you to Godfrey, eh?"

The door happened to be on the further side of the fireplace, and at right angles to Althea's place. She therefore had time to see Dr. Meredith before he saw her. The great grey eyes rested covertly and scrutinisingly for a moment on Dr. Meredith's face.

It was rather pale, with some heavy, careworn lines about the mouth; his forehead was marked by a worried frown, and there was a look of intense anxiety in his eyes. His whole manner and bearing told of a pressing anxiety and worry.

Althea nodded carelessly from the basket-chair.

"Good evening!" she said indifferently.

"Good evening!" he responded. His glance rested for a moment only on his assistant, and then he turned to the fire, and began to make rather a parade of warming himself.

Mr. Howard, in his settled conviction that his two guests' cordial understanding needed no help from him, was occupied in finding a comfortable chair for Dr. Meredith.

"Here, Meredith!" he said, wheeling round the result of his search, "sit down and take what rest you may! You've been to and fro in the roads of Mary Combe this livelong day, now, haven't you?"

"More or less!" was the somewhat weary answer, as Dr. Meredith accepted the invitation. Mr. Howard had placed the chair between the other two chairs and immediately opposite the fire. His assistant, therefore, was on Dr. Meredith's left, and his host on his right.

Either by accident or design, Althea had, in sitting down again, contrived to push her basket-chair further back, so that while she herself could see the other two faces perfectly, her own was slightly shadowed by a projecting corner of the mantelsheff.

"What makes you so late, Meredith?"

Mr. Howard's question was put to Dr. Meredith after a brief interval, during which the latter had, at his host's invitation, filled and lit his pipe, and mixed himself some whisky and water from a tray on the small table behind him.

"I've only just got back from a longish drive," was the answer, given between the long puffs of smoke.

From the corner, his assistant was very keenly watching Dr. Meredith's face as he spoke. At the words, a quick change passed over her own, and her lips parted a little suddenly, and she bent her head almost imperceptibly forward as though waiting for the next words—yet, when they came, she started.

"I've been over at Stoke Vere for the last three hours."

This gratuitous and rather unprofessional information as to his proceedings came from Dr. Meredith with an impulsive force, which made it plain that the statement was one that summed up his thoughts at the moment, and that they were so engrossed in it as to make it an absolute necessity to him to speak of the subject to some one.

"Ah!" Mr. Howard turned to him with interest. "I was just going to ask you if you could give me news from there. How is Miss Swinton this evening?"

Althea Godfrey's lips were almost colourless now. Her eyes were riveted on Dr. Meredith's face, and were watching, so intently that no shade of it escaped her, the expression which was strengthening on it moment by moment. It was really only a deepening of the anxiety which it had worn on his entrance, but at Mr. Howard's question it spread from feature to feature,

until the whole face told of nothing else save intense, harassed responsibility and care.

"That's more than I can say, Howard," he said slowly. "I left her very low indeed."

Mr. Howard looked quickly round at him. Dr. Meredith's tone, in its mixture of weariness and worry, was enough to attract attention. Althea had thrown her hands behind her head some time before in a would-be careless pose. It was not possible, even had the other two been looking at her, for either of them to have seen that at Dr. Meredith's answer they had clasped so closely round the wickerwork of the chair that it was cutting deep purple lines into the flesh.

"You think so badly of her!" he said gravely.

Dr. Meredith made a little acquiescent gesture.

"If no change has taken place by the morning, it's a matter of hours," he said, in a grimly terse fashion.

"Hours!" The word came suddenly from Dr. Godfrey's corner. The voice which spoke it was rather strained, as if the speaker's throat were stiff and dry.

But Dr. Meredith did not seem to notice anything unusual about his assistant's voice. Indeed, he did not seem to be considering Dr. Godfrey at all. He stared straight before him into the fire as he responded, mechanically enough:

"Yes; hours!"

There was a little pause, and then he laid his pipe down and went on, speaking apparently impartially to either of the other two; so impartially, in fact, that it sounded more as if he were expressing his thoughts aloud than addressing any one:

"I'm beaten, I'm afraid! I've had a hard wrestle, too. And I've got to break it to that poor old chap to-morrow. He's as hopeful as a child, and has a childishly implicit faith in the nurse and me, though we've both done our best to deceive him, I'm sure."

A quick sigh ended the speech, and then Dr. Meredith replaced his pipe in his mouth suddenly, and gave a furious whiff at it.

Althea Godfrey's hands were bruised in great dark lines, and she was biting her under-lip hard and fiercely. But she did not even seem to feel it or know it.

"Poor Swinton!" said Mr. Howard very sympathetically. "That girl is the light of his eyes, indeed. Poor, dear man!"

He stared also at the fire and gave a quick movement in his chair, and then, lifting his head again, glanced at his guest.

"Meredith!" he said, "I beg your pardon, I'm sure. I didn't bring you here to recall to your mind, after a heavy day, all that's been distressing in it. I'm ashamed of my thoughtlessness. Let me assure you, Dr. Godfrey, that this is not a criterion of my friendly habits! Have some more whisky, Meredith! Help yourself, please. Godfrey has refused a second go. Won't you change your mind?" he added heartily to his younger guest. Then, as Dr. Godfrey answered him by lifting up an almost untouched tumbler, he turned himself invitingly towards the fire, "I picked up a really first-rate little dachshund when I was away, Meredith," he said. "The only cheering point in a most unsatisfactory holiday, the beast is. You must come and look at her when you've got ten minutes to spare. I know, though," he added, laughing, "that you don't share my dislike to holidays! You are not so lazy!"

A discussion ensued on holidays and holiday resorts generally; a discussion carried on principally through Mr. Howard's energetic desire to divert his guests' minds. Dr. Meredith's share in it was uncertain; at one time his contribution to the conversation was long and forcible, during the following quarter of an hour it consisted wholly of monosyllables thrown into Mr. Howard's remarks; and then he would seem to rouse himself with a jerk, as it were, and again take his full share. And thus it went on for the rest of the evening.

As for Dr. Godfrey, the long basket-chair might almost as well have been empty, as far as its occupant's social efforts were concerned. A very few succinct answers, if directly appealed to by Mr. Howard, constituted the sum of Althea Godfrey's conversation for the rest of the evening. Only once did she show the slightest increase of interest.

The conversation had drifted along various erratic channels to a singular case of feminine self-sacrifice and heroism which had been lately recorded in the papers. Dr. Meredith and Mr. Howard were engaged in asserting, in a magnanimously masculine fashion, that women, on occasion, were capable of great things towards their own sex.

Suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, Dr. Godfrey struck in with an enthusiastic denial of this fact; a quick, impulsive denial, in which self-sacrifice was main-

tained to be an impossible virtue, and never practised between women. This was, however, abruptly cut short by the striking of half-past eleven. At the sound the slight figure lifted itself from the depths of the basket chair, and breaking off in the very middle of a sentence, Dr. Godfrey said something hasty and incoherent about "keeping Mrs. Johnson about," and a "pleasant evening."

Mr. Howard received the excuses and adieux with many cordial regrets, and with a nodded farewell to Dr. Meredith, Althea Godfrey left the library, and let herself out at the front door.

The wet day had ended in a clearer evening; some of the heavier clouds had blown away at sunset, and though most of the sky was still dark, there were here and there great tracts of deep, midnight blue, with a few stars, whose far too clear shining betokened more rain.

A cold, damp wind blew across Althea's face as she stooped to latch behind her the gate of the Rectory drive. She took off her hat when she lifted her head again, and stood with her white forehead bared, as if the cool chill of the wind were grateful to it; her eyes fixed on the ground at her feet, and one hand resting on the top bar of the gate. All at once a touch on the gate itself made her start and quiver all over.

"Thea!" said Dr. Meredith, in a low voice, "it is you! I hoped I should catch you."

There was distinct relief in his voice; it was evident enough that he really greatly wished to see her, and speak to her, and was very glad to have the opportunity. But Althea's voice was curt in the extreme as she said:

"Well! What is it you want?"

"I want to speak to you."

"I see nothing to prevent you from doing so."

Althea had turned away from the gate with her first words, and Dr. Meredith had followed her example; they were thus perforce, so to speak, walking side by side.

There was a long stretch of lane reaching from the Vicarage and the church which stood almost in the same enclosure, to the first houses of the Mary Combe street. It was shaded by hedges, out of which grew elms whose branches, interlacing in the middle, made a dimness in the Church Lane on the brightest summer day.

To-night the dimness was almost darkness, and the two, though walking side by

side, could scarcely see the outline of the other's figure, and could not discern a feature of the other's face.

If Dr. Meredith could have seen Althea's face at that moment, his next words might never have been said. It was set into the hardest of rigid lines, and there was a steely glitter of determination in the great grey eyes.

"I've tried more than once to get at you to-day," he said, "but I couldn't find you in. I want some help from you, Thea, please."

The last word was spoken almost humbly, as if the speaker scarcely expected to get what he asked.

"You want help? What help?"

"Advice. Look here, Thea. I know you formally declined to have anything to do with the case, but I'm at my wits' end."

"Indeed!"

Apparently Dr. Meredith was too engrossed in his subject, and too anxious to gain his point, to notice the freezing indifference of her tone. At all events, he ignored it.

"Yes," he went on eagerly and hastily. "I needn't say that it's Rose Swinton I mean."

"You need not!" was the comment. It was scarcely audible, and seemed to come from between Althea's closed teeth.

"You see," he went on, "I've discovered a complication now, to-night, that I never dreamed of! And what's worse, I simply cannot get the fever under. I've been doing all I know, but if something can't be done in the next twenty-four hours, I don't see the glimmer of a chance for her! And yet I know and feel that she ought to be got through. The complication in itself isn't much. It's this."

He ran through a brief technical statement, during which his face grew more harassed than ever.

"Wait a minute," he added, as he finished, apparently not knowing in the least, in his anxiety, that he had had no response of any kind. "I'll just give you an idea of the treatment I've tried, and you'll be guided as to a suggestion."

He proceeded to give his assistant in a few clear words the necessary information.

"And so," he added, turning his anxious face towards hers in the darkness, "I really don't know what to be at. I am most anxious to know what you would advise."

Just as he spoke they emerged from the darkness of the Church Lane into the

comparative clearness of the open street. And, as if involuntarily, he looked at Althea in expectation of her answer. She was gazing straight before her. Her profile, in its rigid, white immobility, looked as if it might have been cut in stone.

Dr. Meredith waited, patiently and humbly enough, for a moment or two. He thought that she must be considering carefully what he had said.

"I shouldn't have thought," he said deprecatingly at length, "of bothering you with this, Thea, after what you said. But I really am indescribably anxious for a second opinion; and I rely on yours."

This last sentence was no adroit bit of flattery introduced to gain his end. It was the spontaneous announcement of an evident fact—a fact that had never passed Dr. Meredith's lips before.

An odd little flash shot into Althea's eyes, and she turned her head perhaps half an inch further from him. But it only seemed to intensify the rigidity of her features.

"I thought," he went on, with all his masculine imperception of his companion's absolute unapproachableness doubled by his keen anxiety, "I thought, Thea, that perhaps you would come over with me to Stoke Vere early to-morrow, and see for yourself what can be done. I've ordered Williams to be——"

His words were broken off by the suddenness of Althea's movement. She turned very sharply, and with her white face full on Dr. Meredith's she said, so slowly and distinctly that each word seemed to cut into the surrounding dimness:

"I entirely decline to give any opinion on the subject, and I wholly refuse to go to Stoke Vere."

"Thea!"

Dr. Meredith stood quite still in the middle of the street, and Althea followed his example, mechanically, apparently.

"Thea!" he repeated, his tone full of amazed, half-indignant injury, "what do you mean?"

"What I have said!" The response came in a voice lowered because of the surrounding houses, but all the more resolute because of its low tones.

"You absolutely refuse to talk over the case with me? You refuse me your help?"

"Most assuredly I refuse."

Still Dr. Meredith seemed unable to realise the words. He repeated, in a voice the surprise of which was almost pathetic in its absolute bewilderment and incomprehension:

"You mean that you refuse to go with me?"

"I emphatically refuse to have anything whatever to do with Miss Swinton as a patient. Can I express myself more plainly?" she ended, with a sarcastic ring in her bitter tone.

"But, Thea, I—it might be a matter of life or death—there's no saying. I seem helpless; I can't think why. I'm sure she ought to be brought round; but everything hitherto has failed in my hands. A second brain, a fresh suggestion, may make all the difference to her—and to me. Thea, think of it—do think of it! I entreat you to help me."

Althea looked full and scrutinisingly at his face, and that flash that had come to her eyes developed into a glitter, from which a cold triumph seemed to spread over her whole face.

"It is of no moment to me whether it is a matter of life or death, whatever it may be to you! And once more, I will have nothing to do with it!"

So saying, she turned abruptly away, and walked on to the Johnsons' house with a steady, swinging step. Dr. Meredith, standing motionless where she had left him, stared almost vacantly after her.

It was about five minutes past eight the next morning, and Dr. Meredith was sitting at a hasty breakfast, while the dogcart was being made ready in the yard, when his sitting-room door was suddenly opened, to close again behind the slight grey-clothed figure of his assistant.

There were odd shadows under Althea Godfrey's eyes, and she was very pale.

"Jim!" she said, in a quick, hurried tone, "I've changed my mind; I'll go with you to Stoke Vere."

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HIS ONLY CHILD.

BY MRS. R. S. DE C. LAFFAN.
(MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.)

CHAPTER I.

"It was a bad job Mammy left us—wasn't it, Daddy?" said Boy. It is possible the child had some other name, but no one had ever heard him called by it. He was simply and unostentatiously "Boy."

There was something very strange the matter with Boy. Now and again he was so cold that his teeth chattered in his head; indeed, he had to look over his shoulder several times to make sure that no one was playing him a trick, and pouring cold water down his back. Then he would burn as if his poor little body were all on fire, two hot red spots would come upon his cheeks, and his breath grow short and fast. Then he would fling out his little hot hands, as if fighting for air. This last gesture troubled Frillums dreadfully.

Frillums was that long-suffering creature, a performing dog. What his original intentions as to breed might have been, no one could say. What he had achieved was being a first-class mongrel, with a supreme intelligence, and a heart so big and loving that it was a wonder it did not burst his ill-bred carcase. His ears had almost the power of speech, so intensely alert were they; and his tail possessed a greater variety of mood than the tails of other dogs. He was a whitish, rough-haired beast, with a faint suggestion of bull

about his head, and had apparently come to the conclusion that he had been born with a large frill round his neck; indeed there can be no manner of doubt that he would have felt distinctly unclothed and unseemly without it. It was a stiff and uncompromising frill, but he had got used to it, and never, save on one lamentable occasion, had been known to gnaw it; an occasion, it must be confessed, when edible supplies had run painfully short for some while back, and mistakes might be looked upon as excusable. Two more items regarding Frillums, and our description of him is complete. He had two lovely black-spectacled eyes, which gave him a knowing and judicial aspect, and he adored "Boy."

When, therefore, Frillums saw those little burning palms flung out as though in wild entreaty, was it any wonder that his first idea was rats; his second, that there was something, anyhow, that ought to be killed, since something was worrying his little master? In the excitement and uncertainty of the moment, Frillums walked round the table on his hind-legs, playing an imaginary tambourine with his fore-legs, and then stood squarely and defiantly on his head, with his heels high in air.

Boy watched the dog's antics with a little wan smile. There was no audience to see; but it was always a good thing for Frillums to rehearse his tricks.

Then the sick child's thoughts went back to the mother he had lost—the mother who would have held his aching head upon her bosom, and bathed his hot brow with

her tears. He could look back and remember many times when she had cried over him like that; remember her in her spangled skirt and tartan scarf, when—as the Queen of the Highland Glen—she had been dancing all day, more or less. She did not always find it a remunerative occupation, and the royal supper was apt to be unpleasantly scant—hence those tears; not for herself, but for Boy. The life of those who wear the motley may be one of appetising variety, but it is not one of certainty—rather one of cruel ups and downs, momentary upliftings and bitter depressions. A few days' rain, and the street tumbler is reduced to penury; a spell of hard frost, and a days' takings may be almost nil.

But we must return to Boy and his little lament over the mother who was gone.

"It was a bad job, Daddy—a bad, bad job for us two."

It is a hard thing to look sentimental when you are painting a scarlet grin upon your countenance; but the heart of the acrobat was big within him as he heard Boy talk like that. Wasn't it enough for the raindrops to be splashing on the small square window that gave such a poor light for his toilet, but that the child must add his little wail to the depressing influences of the day? It would not have done to let a tear find its way down the chalk-white face, and furrow the elaborately smooth surface, even blurring, perhaps, the scarlet smile that was now nearing completion; but the mountebank turned his eyes towards the little figure on the shabby bed by the door, and said, with a break in his voice:

"Yes, my lad—a bad, bad job indeed."

The man had done his best for Boy, whose head rested on an old frilled jerkin neatly rolled into a kind of bolster, the while a sack had been tenderly folded over the shivering shoulders, and firmly secured in place by a sickly-hued jewel supposed to represent a genuine cairngorm, and once, alas! used for the adornment of the poor Queen of the Glen!

The grass was not yet green upon the nameless grave where the poor Queen lay, and Boy was more than ordinarily quick and intelligent for his nine and a half years; hence, every detail of the loss that had desolated his young life was quick and fresh in his remembrance. He could call to mind exactly how she looked in the narrow, uncomfortable-looking box some one had put her in. By

her side lay a little waxen figure, very like the dolls he had so often seen in the shop-windows. The woman of the house they lived in then, had told him his mother had "gone up to heaven."

The child looked up at the very grimy ceiling of the room, but drew from it no shining ideas of a possible abode of light and glory. Rather his mind clung to what had been her next suggestion—the little image that lay upon his dead mother's arm would have been his "brother." This brother in the clouds of imagination absorbed him; not only did he take the form of a possible playmate, but dazzling notions of acrobatic feats that might have been, threw him into ecstasies.

That was in days of prosperity and sunshining that seemed ever so long ago now, though in reality but a very little time since. Sorrow lengthens out the days and the years, so that we lose all reckoning of time; and really while the poor Highland Queen lay gasping out her life, time stood still to Boy and Daddy. As for Frillums, they just had to let him follow the poverty-stricken funeral, and afterwards to lift him from the heaped-up clods beside the grave, and carry him home one wriggling protest. In time, things had brightened up a little. The bitter January days were over; now and then came a soft wind from the west, and bunches of snowdrops and golden crocuses were sold at the street-corners. Food and shelter had still to be worked for, though two lay still and cold in the churchyard.

But now another evil had befallen: Boy was stricken down, and the acrobatic business shorn of half its attractiveness. He had struggled very bravely, poor little fellow, to keep on his legs; but two nights ago, Daddy had had to carry him home—a sad little procession, with Frillums for chief mourner, Frillums with tail between his legs, and head and ears drooping—not a kick left in him, you would have said if you had seen him, let alone a somersault.

And now elevenpence halfpenny had represented yesterday's takings, for the rain had rained, and the wind had been from the east, and people with blue noses and nipped fingers do not care much about standing to see a dog turn head over heels, balance itself on a rope, jump through a hoop, or even stand on its head and play the tambourine like a Christian. Frillums was as plucky as his little master

on these occasions, and would shake the rain from his ears and dash at the tam-bourine as if he loved it. But the harvest gathered in was poor. Elevenpence half-penny was hardly a vast sum upon which to set out to buy a little delicacy or two for a sick child, a bit of fuel, and supper for a man and a dog; especially when the glaring fact that four weeks' back-rent for the shabby room up four pair of stairs was due, would thrust itself under your nose as it were.

"It will be a jolly good job when I'm better, won't it, Dad?" said Boy's piping treble presently; and Frillums, catching a hint of something hopeful in his master's voice, again ran rapidly round the room on his hind-legs, and then came down on all-fours, and barked three times for the Queen—a sort of royal salute that he always gave on demand, and occasionally volunteered in moments of joy.

"It will so, Boy," said Daddy, who had now entirely accomplished the broadest and most telling smile, and was pulling out the ruffles of his jerkin in the hope of making them look a little less tumbled and dejected.

"They don't like the pole trick half as much when I'm not there, do they, Daddy?"

"Not half as much."

"They always think I'm going to fall, don't they?"

"Of course they do."

"And that makes them cry, 'Oh!' They like to cry 'Oh!'"

"Of course they do."

"Once a woman cried—do you dis-remember!—and Mammy got cross, and said: 'Do you think I'd let him take the kid up if he couldn't hold him?'"

"She did—Heaven bless her!"

Boy was silent for a while. One of those bad shivering spells was on him; and he didn't want to shake more than he could help, lest Daddy should be sad all day thinking of it.

"I wasn't afraid," he said at last, as the chill passed off; "it's lovely being up so high, and don't I tie my legs tight round your neck, and fling back with a go? Oh, Dad, I do hope I'll soon be well. It's heavy for you, having to carry the pole all yourself, and beat the drum, and spread the carpet out, and I'm sure you must be lonely without"—here came a catch in Boy's breath—"without Mammy, and without me, and with only Frillums—poor Frillums." Frillums was dancing like a

dervish beside Boy's bed, finally leaping up and falling to licking the poor little flushed face in a frenzy of love and concern.

From all this chatter on the part of Boy, it will be seen that the father was a humble member of the great class called "banquistes," with no ambition towards what is called the Grande Banque, but content to be one of the Petite Banque, or carpet men, who perform in the streets or at small provincial fairs. He himself did the part of the "underneath man," the chief applause falling to Boy, who in the tightest of tights, shortest of jerkins, and merriest of smiles, seemed as boneless as an india-rubber ball; his curly golden head, pretty features, and artless expression winning the hearts of all female spectators, and drawing the coppers from mysterious recesses of their muddled garments. At what is called bending backward, and at the curvet, a difficult trick, Boy was a marvel; and his monkey's somersault never failed to charm. Then, while the father and son took the needful rest which all this posturing renders a necessity, Frillums had his innings. Frillums was ever ardent to begin, and loth to leave off. He loved the applause of the multitude, be that multitude never so unsavoury; and there can be no doubt that his droll figure, serenely walking on his hind-legs, as if to the manner born, and carrying a tin saucer balanced on his front paws, caused the inpourings into that receptacle to be more generous than they otherwise would have been.

But, alas! as has been said before, the petite banquiste is the sport of the weather, and a run of wet days spells poverty and privation. Worse things sometimes, as now, when Boy had got soaked through his flimsy dress, and the chill had entered the marrow of his little bones, and laid him prostrate with alternate burnings and shiverings, and every now and then a pain through his chest like a knife being stuck in and drawn out roughly.

The banquiste was just saying good-bye to Boy—having put a glass of cold water, and an orange, carefully quartered, within his reach—when the door was stealthily opened, and a head, a most unprepossessing head, thrust through the aperture, while a paw—it would be a hollow flattery to call it a hand—grasped the lintel.

"Oh, there you are, Mr. Julius," said a harsh voice, at the sound of which Frillums

retreated under the bed, growling fiercely from his retreat.

"Yes, here I am," replied Mr. Julius, or Professor Julius as he was more frequently called; but it must be confessed he had a rueful air, which betrayed itself in spite of the chalked face and crimson cheek-pieces.

"That's very interesting, that is," said the raspy voice, a tall, shambling body now allowing itself to be visible as a sequel to the unkempt head; "but it 'ud be a blamed sight more interesting to me to know where your money was."

"I am starting off now, Mr. Spavin, to try and earn some," said the Professor; "the rain has cleared off, I see, and maybe I shall make a good day of it."

"No, you don't," said Spavin, shaking his ugly head, "you don't get over me that way. You know it 'ud take you a month of Sundays to make what's due to me, by your capers—there's four weeks, and two goes of firin'—Why, what's that? What's that?" and before the father could interfere, Mr. Spavin had clutched the poor bit of tinted glass that held the sack about Boy's shoulders, and torn it from its place.

"You call yourself an honest man, do you, and keep a stock of jew'ry on 'and, when you owe for rent? This 'ull do nicely to hasp my Sunday neckercher, this will; they'll think a lot of this at the 'Spotted Dog,' they will."

The acrobat held out his hand, and there was a tremble in his voice as he spoke.

"Give me back that brooch, Mr. Spavin," he said; "it was my dead wife's, and it is, I assure you, worth but a few pence. I am sorry to be in your debt, and I feel you have a right to be down on me, an honest right; still, look at my boy—how can I turn out into the streets with the child like that? I feel that I have no right here."

"There's orspitals for sick folk. Send the lad there—and take yerself orf," said Mr. Spavin.

At this, up started Boy with a hoarse cry:

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy, don't send me away where I won't see you any more—don't, don't!"

"You shall not go, my boy, you shall not be taken from me," cried the poor acrobat, soothing the excited child as best he could. Be it said, however, that Mr. Spavin was well within his rights, though he pressed them ungracefully, and even brutally. Not without some mis-giving either, if one might judge by an uneasy glance cast now and again down

the dingy passage that led to the stair-head. Like many a greater man, Mr. Spavin was "afraid of his missus," as the saying goes. But the coast was clear; and so he took up his parable again, lowering his voice somewhat, nevertheless, for fear of accidents.

"It all comes of me 'arbouring scum, that's what it is; it all comes of 'avin' a man on my premises as makes his livin' by tumbling in the streets. It stands to sense now, don't it, as a man can't be of much account who takes to such tricky ways as that to try an' earn his wittals—eh? The very name's agen 'em, now, ain't it? And I tell you what it is, Mr. Julius," coming close up to the individual in question, who was resting against the bed and holding Boy tight, and snapping his fingers in his face, "it's my opinion as you're on the sneak."

"On the sneak?" said the other, amazed.

"Yes, on the sneak. Does it stand to sense now, I ask you, that a man would go and paint his blooming face different to what nater made it, if he weren't in 'iding for some job or other?"

"If you don't look out," said Mr. Julius, turning his scarlet grin and chalk-white face full upon his opponent, "I shall be giving you a good hiding in a bit."

But just then Mr. Spavin made a diversion by springing about two feet in the air, and coming down on his feet with a blood-curdling oath. Frillums had nipped him daintily in the fleshy part of the leg. No blood was drawn, but the pain was sharp, and Spavin hopped about, not silently either, on one leg, with almost as much agility as though he had been an acrobat himself. The noise brought Mrs. Spavin to the scene, and from that moment Spavin was a different man.

The lady was long and lean, and "did" her hair in the window-curtain style of many years ago; but under her painfully tight apron-string there beat a woman's heart.

"Whatever are you a-doin' of, Amos?" she said, in a thin, astonished voice, looking at the antics of her better half with much disfavour.

Amos held on to his injured leg and explained matters.

"It was the darned dog," he said.

"Then you've bin a-aggrawatin' of it, Amos. And whatever's the matter with the poor child there? Why, he's tremblin' like a haspen, so he is—and Mr. Julius, too, quite put out like."

"They owe us money, Susan Mary," said

Mr. Spavin, "and I've been a-puttin' of the case plain and simple-like."

But Susan Mary was not in a patient mood.

"Of course they owes us money," she said, tosaing her head so that some danglements upon her black lace cap rang quite a little chime; "and sorry they is to owe it, as well I know, and glad they'll be to pay it. How many times have I told you, Amos Spavin, that I won't have you a-'arrowin' of the tenants? Do anything else you like, says I, but leave the tenancies to me."

"My dear," said Spavin, "you're a very superior woman, no one will deny that; but rent is rent, and a matter of four weeks is doo."

Mrs. Spavin lost her temper.

"Can't you see as the child is ill, an' the man druv? Don't you know as his wife is scarce cold in her grave, and his heart nigh broke?"

Assuredly the man she spoke of was trembling now, and his poor white and crimson-patched face was twitching with emotion. Oh, the irony of the motley when the heart is swelling even to bursting! Nor is the clown the only one who has to play the fool while the tears that burn have to be kept back, and the ache is in the heart. Life makes these claims upon our courage sometimes, teaching us to endure, and to wear the mask of the mummer bravely.

There was one ray of comfort in the acrobat's heart as he set off, with Frillums at his heels, on his day's march, and that was Mrs. Spavin's goodness. Christianity takes many forms, and of these Mrs. Spavin was one.

"Be good to the little chap," he said, as he passed the landlady by the doorway, and she watched him downstairs with her head a good deal on one side, presently appealing to the "general girl," who, dusty and forsaken-looking, was struggling with a broom taller than herself.

"What a way them actor-gentlemen has with them, Seliner—they reg'lar twines themselves around your bein'—which my own cousin on the mother's side, once removed, ran away from a good 'ome to follow a livin' skelington what belonged to a carrywan, and all because he'd a taking tongue of his own. Now set that broom down, and run away and make a bit of hot toast and a sup of tea for that there suffering hinnercent; we shan't miss it, and it 'ull bring a most almighty deal of comfort to his por little inside."

And surely Mrs. Spavin's sup of tea may take rank alongside that "cup of cold water" of which we have all read.

CHAPTER II.

It was a day of sudden showers, in which the raindrops struck upon the leaves, and danced upon the pavement; and of little bursts of sunshine, in which the drops glistened like jewels, and the flags shone bright like shining ribbons unrolled as far as the eye could see. April was showing her changeful face of smiles and tears, and the London season was waking up to life; and crossing at Piccadilly Circus was a serious undertaking. Not only were the baskets at the corners of the streets heaped high with flowers, but branches of flowering shrubs, and even boughs covered with delicate young green leaves, were to be seen also. It was as though the country had come running to the town, and cried out jubilant: "See how fair I am, waking from my winter sleep, and adorning myself to greet the spring!" Little ragged children looked longingly at the pretty massed blossoms, and hung about near where the women's busy fingers were making up tiny bouquets for sale. The poor do love flowers so much, perhaps because so often out of their reach!

Most of us know what it is to feel very much alone among a gay and busy crowd, and how the light-heartedness of those around us seems to emphasize the sadness of our own thoughts, the desolation of our own hearts. It was so with the street acrobat as he and Frillums spread their carpet and went through their various performances in this side street or that, attracting but small and unprofitable audiences, it must be confessed. It all seemed so dull, stale, and unprofitable without Boy! Even Frillums felt the blank, and went through his tricks with less eagerness than usual; actually dropping the tin saucer more than once, and now and then standing still, gazing wistfully down the long, seemingly endless vista of a street, and giving a plaintive whine.

The sudden showers, too, were against poor Mr. Julius, for people hesitate to stand still when loitering may mean getting wet through. Their only stroke of luck the whole livelong morning was a sixpenny bit dropped in Frillums' tray by a dainty little lady out shopping with her mother, and so taken with the dear "walking dog" that

she could hardly be induced to get into the carriage that awaited her.

Food once in the day was a necessity, and his master felt that Frillums deserved a captain's biscuit, after that sixpence, so one was bought, and two-pennyworth of plum duff for Boy's supper. Now it must be confessed that in this last purchase Boy's Daddy did not show himself the best possible judge of the most suitable food for a child suffering from pneumonia; still, the plum duff was well-intentioned, and sat comfortably in the side breast-pocket of the frilled jerkin. Mr. Julius had a theory that trade, from his point of view, improved as the day waned. In the earlier hours people's minds were too intent upon business to find place for festive inclinations; but after luncheon-time, business energies became less smart and keen. Well fed, and serenely conscious of a morning well spent, a man's or woman's steps might well linger to watch a show; his or her hand was more ready to be slipped into the pocket and extract the shining copper. Then in the grey of the early evening, folks took to sauntering; out in what may be called the near suburbs of London City, the districts north-west and south-west, lovers would linger side by side to cull all the freshness and novelty of the light evenings, that prolonged and gentle radiance that has all the winter been lacking. The wife of the man who lived in a semi-detached villa, or a smart terrace, would start, a child in each hand, to meet the house-father, and bring him home in triumph.

All these ebbs and flows of life in and about a vast city are known to all wandering musicians and all banqueters, who make their profit out of them. A well-dressed woman of the middle classes, with her children about her, was always a glad-some sight to Julius and Boy, and Frillums had been known to make quite a small fortune, staking gravely on his hind-legs round such a group, and then suddenly and unexpectedly standing on his head, to a chorus of tinkling laughter. Then would come a bit of conjuring, balls tossing in the air, one following the other in regular sequence, a whole string of them rising and falling; somersaults, single and double, the bend backwards, and Frillums turning rapid "cart-wheels" from one end of the carpet to the other. What laughter, what delight among the children!

But the pole trick was the cleverest "coup" in the whole performance. It could

not be done often in a day, it takes too much out of the man; when it is done it is always a success. It has about it an element that fascinates—the element of danger. The man may not break his neck or his back; on the other hand, he may. No one would own to these emotions, but there is no doubt they exist in many a breast. It was most exciting to see a sort of telescopic pole opened out, each length pinned into security with a stout iron peg, and then the whole set up on end with no greater support at the base than a shallow ring of iron; more exciting still to see the white and scarlet mountebank climb steadily to the slender point of the pole, thereon balance himself like a swimmer in a summer sea, awaiting the ascent of Boy, intently watched by Frillums from below; delightful to see Boy spring to the arms of his sire, fold his slender legs round that sire's neck, and so, hanging head downwards, slip the full length of the pole, safely carried to terra firma, and thereon turning a perky somersault to assure the audience he was none the worse for his flight pick-a-back down the unsupported and improvised switch-back. It was poor enough sport to Mr. Julius, performing his pole trick alone, or even carrying Frillums up upon his shoulders, "*faute de mieux*"; neither did Frillums appreciate the swift descent, but usually gave a distressful whine as the pair came down, and would be tremulous about the legs as he staggered about with his tin saucer subsequently.

Still, the best had to be made of things, and the thought of the money due for rent stung Mr. Julius to exertion like the strokes of a flail. Mrs. Spavin made the best of things, but she was a poor woman, and must be paid—somehow. As the day wore on, the sudden clouds came no more; the sky was clear and serene, paling as the sunlight died. Even in the long, bare streets the western breeze blew soft and balmy, and here and there a star twinkled behind the long rows of house-roofs and chimney-stacks. Other stars of a more earthly kind, to wit, the lights in the drinking-shops at the corners of the streets, began to twinkle too, and the lamp-lighter set others ablaze in the tall lamps over which he presided.

Our acrobat knew that his best time was coming, and a certain sense of satisfaction stole over him. His luck had been good since that frugal dinner we wot of; the plum duff nestled cooily in his pocket, and

his thoughts seemed full of Boy. With a lighthearted heart he spread his carpet just beyond a refreshment bar that blazed like a constellaton; then he beat the little kettle-drum that hung across his shoulder by a strap, and Frillums whirled round on his hind-legs like a thing possessed.

Folks began to gather round; at first one or two, then in little groups, then like bees round a honey-pot.

"I shall have a good take this time," thought the good Julius to himself, "and then I shall set off home to Boy."

That is the way with us mortals; we say I shall do this or that, and all the time fate has laid out quite different plans for us. Even so it was written, as you will presently see, that Mr. Julius was to take not one farthing from that large audience of his; the largest and the best that he had had for many a day.

Never had he performed better; never had Frillums shown himself more keen in acting up to his master.

The backward bend came off grandly, and the sight of a man walking on all-fours, inside out, like an inverted frog, appeared to yield intense delight to the lookers-on. The conjuring part of the entertainment was always just so much rest, also the grand performance on the piceolo, to which Frillums danced so elegantly. Being, as all good workmen must, really fond of his work, our banquiste was so engrossed in the double backwards and forwards somersault and rapid couvet, that he failed to notice a strange and sudden alteration in the demeanour of his audience.

Instead of watching the mountebank and his dog, they were all staring in one direction—right on ahead, down a handsome and fashionable thoroughfare, closely abutting, as is often the case in London, upon the narrower street, with its flaring gin-palace at the corner.

Then, at first gradually, later with a rush, the concourse of people from which the acrobat had hoped great things, even to the partial satisfying of Mr. Spavin's demands, melted away like snow in sunshine, and he and Frillums were left lamenting.

Not only was this so, but men and boys came running down the pathway; passing cabmen came to a halt, asking each other from their high perches, "what was up?"

Then a voice shouted "Fire!" and the cry was taken up on all sides, while people seemed to start up out of the earth or to fall from the clouds, so quickly were

they massed together, so densely did they crowd along; so did they run, and rush, and bawl, each one seeming to outvie his neighbour in the clamour he could make.

The acrobat was swept along with the dense stream of human creatures that gathered and surged about him. Carpet and drum and folded pole were left behind; he had but time to catch up Frillums, squeeze him tight under one arm, and then let himself drift. On and on, then came a halt—but such a halt!

It was like finding oneself in a human whirlpool; for one or two bewildered policemen could not do much in the way of keeping order. The point of interest to all was a block of large and handsome houses, of which the end one belched forth volumes of smoke from its second and third-storey windows; while now and again a fiery tongue of flame darted through the rolling masses of grey vapour. Mr. Julius found himself jammed in, just opposite the scene of the fire; then, all in a moment, like a parted stream the crowd was cloven asunder, and a desperate man, hatless, coatless, begrimed with smoke, was dragged into an open space that had been cleared, Heaven only knew how. There he stood, a terrible figure, tears streaming down and furrowing his blackened cheeks, his hands outstretched—now to the heaven that seemed so pitiless, now to those around him—promising gold, gold, gold, to any one who would save his boy! The man was as one mad, and kept clutching those nearest, and crying, "He is my only child—my only child!"

They said this, and they said that; the engines and escapes would be there directly; some even vowed they heard the hard gallop of the engine-horses; many tried to climb the burning stairway; one, a servant of the house, was brought out senseless. It was one of those terrible fires that smoulder and smoulder, and then break out suddenly like a flood, and cut off retreat. The master of the house had been out with some friends; the servants in the basement storey; the child asleep in his nursery—the child for whom the mother had given her life. Filmy curtains hung about his little bed, dainty hangings at the windows. So far, the closed door had kept the flames back, but outside the fiery tongues licked the panels and made them crackle.

The crowd below grew like an in-coming tide, though in reality only a few moments had passed since the cry of fire was raised.

Surging like a sea, the people swayed this way and that, the centre of all the tumult that wild, despairing figure, the father of the child who was known to be in the blazing building. But all at once a hush fell upon the crowd—an awful stillness, broken only by the sound of long-drawn breathings that were almost sobs. A window in the third floor had been slowly opened, and a little white figure had crawled out on to the ledge.

Happily one of those shallow railed-in coping-stones for plants ran across the window, and this gave the child room to crouch half in and half out, and something to hold on to.

A fearful background to the little helpless figure was made by the flicker of flame—a flicker that caught the gleam of golden hair, and the dead-white beauty of a small uplifted face. If a crowd can be cruel, it can also be kind.

Some one stripped off his coat and held it extended before the starting eyes of the wretched father; some one else spoke earnestly to him, and besought him not to call to the child.

"If you do he will jump down," said this wise counsellor, and a sort of protesting groan rose up from those within hearing. Many voices called out for a ladder; scores would have rushed up to the boy's rescue had there been a ladder at hand—yes, though the flames were now breaking out from the windows below. There is plenty of courage in the world, and only occasion is needed to call it forth.

Some new houses were being built a little further on, but alas! no ladder was there. The man in the motley went with others to search; the scarlet grin was still there, and he seemed as one who jeered with death and danger, but he was terribly in earnest, and his heart big with pity and resolve. A scaffolding had been taken down in one place, and three or four slender poles lay upon the ground.

"Help me to bring along one of these," said Motley, and they helped him, nothing believing.

He gave his directions in a clear, plain manner, and presently the tall, mast-like pole was standing straight under the window where the little white figure still crouched and clung, held firm by as many hands as could reach to grasp it tight.

The acrobat stepped up close to the man, who was now on his knees in the dust and mire, with only hoarse, bubbling sounds coming from his ashen lips.

"I will save your boy, if I can, only keep very still. I, too, have an only child," and the red grin on the speaker's face made the words sound like a grim jest, yet in the tones of his voice was a resolute resolve; and as he threw his head back and looked at the summit of the mast, his eyes were those of a hero.

The silence that then fell on all was wondrous, and slowly but surely the white-jerkined figure climbed up nearly to a level with the open window.

Nearly, but not quite.

A woman in the crowd cried out, and in a moment her face was crushed against a man's shoulder to silence her.

Frillums, tenderly held in the arms of a stranger, shivered and shook, but had been trained never to give tongue without orders. The silence was terrible in its completeness. Then all heard a quiet voice speaking authoritatively to the child:

"Jump—as near me as you can; do not be afraid; I will catch you."

The banquiste had balanced himself on the top of the pole, his legs twisted in some inexplicable manner about the body of it. His arms were free and outstretched.

There was a moment's breathless pause, and then the child rose and placed one little naked foot on the shallow iron tracery round the coping-stone.

A fiercer flicker of flame in the room behind threw the white figure into vivid relief, caught anew the radiance of the golden hair.

Then, one swift and horrible moment, and the child was in the acrobat's arms, the two figures swaying slightly backward for an instant, then growing steady.

They saw—that sea of pallid faces all turned upwards, that throbbing, silent, waiting crowd—they saw the child climb upon the man's shoulders and knit his arms about his neck; they saw him glance downwards where the flames from the lower window were now licking the pole like living tongues bent on destruction, and with a flash he was down through the flames, and caught and held, while some one carried the child to the father, who, almost fainting as he was, clasped him to his breast and broke out sobbing like a woman. Where silence had reigned now was wildest tumult, shouts and cheers, and mingling with these the rumble and roar of the coming engines, and the crash of the falling stairway within the doomed house.

Mr. Spavin had been what he called "glorifying" at the "Spotted Dog," with the poor Highland Queen's trumpery brooch stuck in his necktie—unknown to Mrs. Spavin, you may be sure—and drinking as many glasses as he could get at any one else's expense. He was consequently rather unsteady in his gait, though supernaturally solemn as to countenance, and capable of the most cutting irony. When close to his own door, whom should he catch sight of but his defaulting tenant, the mountebank, also hurrying home.

But such a mountebank!

Sans drum, sans pole, sans everything, save poor Frillums!

Such a Frillums!

Tail drooping, ears to match, frill all torn to shreds, following at his master's heels the very picture of abject misery and depression. Mr. Spavin stood still—that is, leant against a friendly wall, pushing his cap to the very back of his shaggy head, and leering at his tenant.

"Well," he said, "you do look a sight! So the bobbies have been after you at last, and you've had a run for it? I told you I knew you was on the sneak, didn't I? A man don't paint his face and make his dorg stand wrong side up for nothin', cuss me if he does!"

The acrobat's face, once so white and red, was begrimed with smoke and dust; his dress was torn, and scorched in places, his hands blackened, his white conical cap not to be seen; he was in truth a sorry sight.

Mr. Spavin came, in a rather uncertain line, it must be confessed, to meet him; intercepting him just as he was about to place his foot on the doorstep.

"No, yer don't," said the glorified one, with overpowering solemnity. "I'd have you to know as mine is a 'spectable 'ouse, and you owes me a month's rent. I must have my door—or—hout you go!"

The grimy, blackened object before him broke into mocking laughter, unclosed his clenched fist, and there, glittering in the light that was just above them, lay not one, but many golden coins.

The exclamation that escaped from Mr. Spavin must not be written down here. It was expressive, but hardly polite. The whole aspect of the man changed.

"My dear Mr. Julius, if I have been a little—what shall we say, blunt!—forget it. I am an Englishman, and bluntness is the national—what d'ye call it?—ahem! you

have had great luck to-day—great indeed. After you, sir!" bowing politely as the door opened, cleverly pulled by a string from above.

Mr. Julius rushed up the narrow stairs, followed madly by Frillums, and into the room where he had left Boy that morning.

There was a bright fire in the room, and by its light he could see Mrs. Spavin bending over the bed; she had a spoonful of something in one hand, her other arm was under Boy's head.

"Boy, Boy!" cried the father, flinging himself on his knees on the bare boards, and catching the child's hand in his, "see, I have lots of money now, I can buy you everything you want—everything to make you well."

But Boy took no heed. He looked at the poor begrimed, yet loving face, with eyes that did not see. His breath came with a strange rattling sound; his lips were livid, and stretched over the white teeth.

Mrs. Spavin had moved to the fireplace, and was crying quietly by the fender.

"What is this, Mrs. Spavin?" almost shouted poor Julius. "What is the matter with my boy?"

"Which it's more than I can say, Mr. Julius," said the frightened woman, tampering with truth, and shaking like a leaf.

"My God—is he dying?"

She made no reply, only wrung her wispy apron as one wrings clothes that are newly washed.

Then Mr. Julius acted very strangely, so much so that she came to the conclusion he had gone off his head.

He spun the sovereigns in the air one by one—till, in their swift revolving, they formed a golden ring—laughing out loud the while. Then he asked her, first, how much he owed her, and paid her on the spot; then to leave him, which she did.

Ten minutes later a respectably, if poorly-dressed man came hastily out of Mrs. Spavin's respectable abode, hurried to the end of the dingy street, and called a cab.

This was an incident never to be forgotten at Spavin's. In telling the strange story of Mr. Julius the acrobat, in after years, Mrs. Spavin always paused solemnly after the sentence, "Then he called a cab; Spavin saw him with his own eyes." She paused to note the effect of this stupendous statement upon her hearers. People who "called cabs" were rare at Spavin's. But perhaps we had better tell the rest of this strange night's adventures in Mrs. Spavin's own word.

"An' there was I, standin' beside the dear child as I thought were took for death—and up comes Mr. Julius, and with him a real, born gentleman as nat'ral as any-think, and a young woman, mighty pleasant spoken, too, but with the queerest bonnet on her 'ed ever you saw, and says the gentleman to me, 'My good woman'—oh, yes, he did, quite composed and pleasant like—'we must have a larger room for our young friend here,' and in half an hour's time, if you'll believe me, they was all down in my front set on the first floor, as happened to be empty by a special Providence as you may say, and the poor sick child bein' nursed and seen to same as if he was one of the young Princes in the Tower, as the sayin' goes; and that there dratted dog sat on my best ten-and-six-penny hearthrug same as if he'd been born there, and never known no other. Well, well, there's hups and downs, an' downs and hups, and it was hup with Mr. Julius that time, and no mistake; and there was Spavin as perlite as if he'd bin a real dook—an' he'd not been always that, far from it; there'd bin a bit of money owed, and me and Spavin had had words about it, for you all know what he is; he's one of them sort as is apt to get on pinnacles, and has to come down suddint, as is only to be expected; but he's a worthy man enough in his own way, is Spavin, only given to set himself up on pinnacles, now and again. Well, the long and the short of it was, the boy get well, and all owing to the grand doctor and the woman with the grave-yard bonnet; and money seemed runnin' about like so much water, so it did."

Not once, but twenty, forty, sixty times did Mrs. Spavin tell this marvellous story, ending up by saying how a carriage with two horses came at last, and all the street turned out to look at it, and "stood gapin', so you might have put an orange spiece in their mouths and them never the wiser;" and in this carriage was a lady, something wonderful to see, and Boy was wrapped in a shawl and carried out and set on the seat beside her, and the whole vision disappeared, "so you might have thought it was a dream."

That drive on a certain sunny day, when the sky was blue as violets even in London, was a vast event to Boy. He cast furtive glances at the lady beside him, and communed with himself secretly. She was very much wrinkled, something like an old apple, he thought, but very beautiful; and her teeth, when she smiled, were like ivory.

"Do you know who I am?" she said at last; and Boy said:

"No," and made wide eyes in his wonderment.

"I am the grandmamma of the little boy your father saved from the burning house, little Guy Dennison, and I want you to like me, and call me always your friend, and tell me anything that I can do for you."

"Have you plenty of money?" said Boy gravely.

"Yes, quite plenty," said the lady; but he noticed a little frown upon her face.

"Then would you buy Frillums a silver collar? He has wanted one a long time, you know, because his frill gets crushed, and wet days it crumples up and annoys him."

"Frillums shall not be annoyed any more," said the lady, and now she smiled.

"Is there anything else you would like?" she said.

"Yes," said Boy, and his bonnie blue eyes shone like the sky above them, "something pretty for Mrs. Spavin; she's been so good to me!"

"Child," said the lady, and now there were tears in her eyes, "you have a heart of gold."

"What is that?" said Boy.

But she made no answer.

Money and influence can do a good deal; and, in course of time, Mr. Julius aspired to the Grande Banque, that is, the profession of one who performs at circuses of the first class. His salary was an ample one, and Boy was sent to school. The lad showed much talent in various ways, among other things promising to be a great musician.

And so a high destiny was his; and happy days were in store for the acrobat and his only child.

A COMEDY IN CRAPE.

By A. L. HARRIS.

"I've half a mind to try it," said Mr. Timothy Yabaley. "Of course, I know it's a risk, but then, sich is life. From the moment you draw your first breath you're beset with trials and tribbylations and risks of all sorts. There's danger lurking in the injerrubber tube of your feeding bottle, and rocks ahead, with convulsions to follow, in the cutting of your own teeth. The question is," reflectively chewing the

end of the penholder, "the question is, whether, with so many risks ready made and lying in wait for you round every corner, it's worth your while looking up a fresh one for yourself? I dunno, I really dunno, what to be at. Soon's ever I get myself pretty well screwed up to the point, the shop bell's sure to ring, and by the time I've done serving a customer I'm all run down again."

He paused to run his hands through his hair, which had already—what there was of it—somewhat of the appearance of the crest of a perplexed cockatoo. Having done which he again fell to studying a small slip of printed matter which lay before him.

"I can't but admit as it reads well," he observed, still as though addressing an invisible third party. "It reads well; the question is, would it work as well as it reads? I think I'll just run over it again."

The text of the above soliloquy proved to be an extract cut from the advertising sheet of a local newspaper, and ran as follows:

"Matrimonial Agency; strictly private, confidential, genuine.—Mrs. Wilkins has several respectable widows, age thirty-four to forty-five; suitable for small tradesmen and others. Write in confidence to nine, Crab Apple Row, Cowslip. Stamp."

Mr. Yabsley again had recourse to the penholder while he continued to muse aloud:

"I'm what you might call a small tradesman myself—small but snug. The thing is, do I want a widder? I've managed without one for a matter of five-and-fifty year, and I might have done so comfortable till the end but for that dratted advertisement. Ever since it caught my eye I've been sort of unsettled, not knowing my own mind two minnits together. I don't doubt but what a widder'd be companionable; and I do find it a bit lonesome sometimes after the shop's shut and the boy gone home. But then I've heard as widders is ticklish handling, and she mightn't hit it off with Jacob."

Jacob was the cat, and a by no means unimportant member of the ménage. At the moment referred to he was sitting with his eyes fixed contemplatively on the top bar of the grate, and had just come to the conclusion that he could relish a bloater for his supper.

"Jacob," said Mr. Yabsley, disturbing his train of thought, "what's your opinion of widders?"

Jacob turned his head slowly round, looked at him for a second or so, as though casting the matter over in his mind, and then winked.

"Jacob," said his master reprovingly, "you're a rank bad 'un."

Then rumpling his hair, thirdly and in conclusion, he remarked decisively:

"Anyhow, I'll sleep on it."

The shop, which bore the name of "T. Yabsley" over the door, was a tobacconist's and newsmonger's—the composite business being conducted by T. Yabsley with the aid of the boy. The latter took down the shutters, swept out the shop, cleaned windows and knives, broke crockery, and made himself generally useful, in return for three and sixpence a week and his dinner.

When the tobacconist came downstairs next morning his face was still wearing the worried, irresolute look which he had taken to bed with him.

He was a precise, spare little man, clean shaven, with the exception of two small straggling tufts of side whiskers; which whiskers, together with the residue of a head of hair, were, like his clothes, of a useful drab tint. He wore spectacles and a blue necktie with white spots, which last article of adornment he fondly believed bestowed upon him a sporting air, not altogether incompatible in one whose stock in trade included the "Sportsman" as well as "The Christian World."

Having taken in the milk and boiled the kettle, he next proceeded to cook his own breakfast; for the boy did not put in an appearance until later; for, with the exception of a woman who came in now and then to "clean up," Mr. Yabsley "did" for himself.

There were sausages for breakfast, and having carefully wiped out the frying-pan, he set about cooking these delicacies with a dexterity that bespoke ample experience.

The sausages frizzled gaily. Mr. Yabsley gazed beyond them into futurity.

"'Suitable for small tradesmen,'" he murmured, turning them with a fork. "'Ages thirty-four to forty-five.' Which, under the circumstances, would be the most suitable? A thirty-fourer or a forty-fiver? Being a fifty-fiver myself, I should say——"

Here in his preoccupation he mistook the handle of the frying-pan for the poker, with such fatal result that the sausages rolled in the cinders, while some of the boiling fat took Jacob between the

joints of the harness and made him swear like a trooper.

"Drat it!" exclaimed Mr. Yabaley, "I'll write for a widdier first thing after breakfast."

And before another hour had passed over T. Yabaley's head, a letter bearing the superscription, "Mrs. Wilkins, nine, Crab Apple Row, Cowallip," had been despatched on its way.

The letter though short was to the point. It simply said:

"Please forward sample widow on approval."

Mr. Yabaley's hand shook a good deal that day, and some of the best birdseye was scattered on the floor. Also, he once ran the risk of offending an exceptionally serious-minded customer by proffering "The Family Herald" in the place of "The Methodist Recorder."

"I rather think," he communed, apropos of this, "I rather think as I shall turn this branch of the business over to the widdier—that is if she turns out satisfactory. Bless me, though!" with a start, "under sich circumstances, she won't be a widdier, she'll be Mrs. T. Yabaley."

He looked round nervously as though to assure himself that there was no one lurking within earshot.

"Timothy, my man, he continued, "you must be uncommon careful, or you'll be compromising of yourself, that's what you'll be doing. And now I come to think of it," he continued, visibly disturbed, "I have heard as widders are main artful. Bless me, I wish I'd never sent that letter! Why, a sample might turn up at any minnit, and the boy gone home to his tea and never no knowing how long he'll take over it."

The perspiration broke out upon his forehead at the thought of his unprotected condition. Accordingly he retired to his parlour behind the shop; and, whenever the bell rang, his eyebrows might be seen cautiously reconnoitring over the top of the red moreen curtain that shielded the apartment from the public gaze. Still he did not feel altogether safe until the shutters were up, and the door of the establishment secured for the night.

He came downstairs next day feeling quite light-hearted, and ate his breakfast with a relish. The boy was late that morning—you could have counted the days in the month when he wasn't late on the fingers of one hand. Still this was more than just the usual half-hour behind time which was only to be expected.

Mr. Yabaley waited for him some while, promising him a dressing down when he did put in an appearance.

"I s'pose I'll have to take down the shutters myself, after all" he remarked irritably. "I've a good mind to stop it out of that boy's pay. Anyhow, I'll give him another five minnits."

So far from any result being attained thereby, he might just as well have kept the five minutes, for at the end of that period there was no boy, and the shutters were still blocking out the daylight. Whereupon, vowing vengeance, which he was perfectly aware he would never have the strength of mind to carry out, he proceeded reluctantly to perform the derogatory task of taking down his own shutters.

He had only just attacked the second or so when his attention was attracted by a slight cough, which seemed to come from somewhere up in the air, and turning round sharply he was, as he subsequently described it, struck all of a heap to find that it had originated from a black, broodingnagian female figure, which, as it loomed before his startled eyes, appeared to cut off the street and the sky and humanity generally, and leave him a solitary, isolated atom beneath the shadow of his approaching Fate.

Even then, however, there was an instant's pause before his mind allowed itself to grasp the full significance of that black-garbed form. Then it coughed again, a cough that was at once interrogative and introductory, and Mr. Yabaley perceived that it wore weeds! Those weeds seemed to choke his very soul. It was the sample!

Still grasping the shutter, he retreated step by step until he had gained the comparative safety of the shop. The sample followed.

A third cough of a more assertive nature than the other two made the little tobacconist's knees knock together. Then:

"T. Yabaley, I believe!" came the enquiry in an insinuating voice about a foot above his head.

"Yes, no—that is, quite so," he gasped.

"I've come about the advertisement," it went on.

"Wha—what advertisement?" stammered Mr. Yabaley, with the intent of gaining time, and still making a shield of the shutter.

"You know," was the significant answer, with a simper that had the effect of a cold door-key upon his vertebrae.

"If I could only put the counter between us," was his despairing thought.

"You know," repeated the apparition—if the term could be applied to sixteen stone or so of solid flesh and blood. "The advertisement you wrote about. Oh, you needn't try to deceive me, you naughty man!" holding up a forefinger cased in sanitary black cotton—when I say sanitary, I mean to imply that there was no lack of ventilation. "You naughty, naughty man!" She came a step or two nearer to him, the floor quivering beneath her tread. "It's too bad of you, that it is!"

She was a fat woman as well as tall, with a flat, flabby face, surmounted by a rusty crape bonnet, and she carried a bloated umbrella and a reticule gorged to repletion.

Mr. Yabaley gazed up at her as he might have done at the dome of St. Paul's, while his circulation seemed to come to a deadlock and the colour fade out of his necktie.

"Suitable for small tradesmen," he murmured.

The face smiled a sea serpent-like smile that appeared to swallow up all its other features. Then, as though resolved to beat about the bush no longer:

"You wants a wife, don't you?"

The effect of this bombshell was to cause the tobacco-nist to drop the shutter like a hot potato, and make one dive for freedom under the counter.

He came up dusty but desperate.

"No," he cried, shaking his head violently, "no, certainly not."

"Oh, yes, you do," with unimpaired cheerfulness, "you wants a wife, a nice, sensible wife, one what's been married before, and so'll know how to make you comfortable."

Then, dropping umbrella and reticule, she clasped both hands, and gazing affectionately round at the stock in trade, exclaimed:

"And how comfortable I could make you, there's no telling!"

"I don't want to be made comfortable," disclaimed Mr. Yabaley eagerly.

"Oh, yes, you do, ducky."

Ducky! That he should have led a respectable, sober, law-abiding existence for five-and-fifty years only to be saluted as "ducky" at the end of it!

"My name," he began, righteous indignation momentarily overcoming craven fear, "my name is——"

"T. Yabaley," interrupted his charmer,

bending over the counter and laying out a box of wax vestas as flat as a pancake with her elbow. "And what does T. stand for? Thomas, or Titus, or Theodore, or Tobias, or what?"

"Tubal Cain," murmured Mr. Yabaley wildly.

"And a very nice name, too. You've never asked me mine."

This with a skittishness that made the lids of the tobacco jars rattle.

"It's Susan, Susan Bundle, though not for long, I hope—meaning the last—but you can call me Susy, if you like," making a playful dab at him across the counter with the bloated umbrella.

Mr. Yabaley dodged the umbrella, and she only succeeded in smashing a clay pipe.

"It's a mercy she's the size she is," he thought. "She'd stick tight if she tried to get at me round the counter."

"You can call me Susy and I can call you——"

"Tiglath Pileser," muttered the tobacco-nist, with a sudden upheaval of old, crusted, Sunday school memories.

"My favourite name," cried Mrs. Bundle, ecstatically. "So, Tiggy, dear, we'll look on it as settled."

"Woman!" exclaimed Mr. Yabaley, fired with a sudden resolution. "What do you mean, and who do you take me for?"

"T. Yabaley," with a smirk.

"But I ain't. Nothing of the sort," he shouted.

The smirk trailed off at one side of the mouth, only to reappear at the opposite corner.

"Get along with you," with lumbering playfulness. "As though I didn't know better. Ain't there the name T. Yabaley over the door? And who else are you if you ain't him? You're a bad, bad man, that you are, to try and deceive a poor, lone, lorn widdler."

"That's the name, right enough," explained Mr. Yabaley. "But he's gone away."

The flabby countenance became a trifle elongated.

"Gone away—and when's he expected back?"

"Never."

The last traces of the smirk melted away, and the jaw dropped.

"Never," she repeated after him. "Then I should like to know who's going to pay me my railway fare? One and threepence, Parliamentary, it were, and——"

A sudden lifting of the cloud from the

doughy features showed that she had hit upon the weak point in the defence.

"But how about the letter as was wrote to Mrs. Wilkins only yesterday, asking——"

"Yes, yes, I know," interrupted the tobaccoist hastily. "The fact is he changed his mind sudden—had a letter—left me to mind the business—said I wasn't to expect him till I see him, which would be never, and if any one called I was to say as his movements was a bit uncertain, in consequence of there being so many railway accidents lately."

All this poured out with great glibness and without a stop, as the speaker, having once quitted the narrow, uphill path of veracity, found himself almost rolling down the opposite declivity.

Mrs. Bundle regarded him with a vacant stare.

"What's his address?" she demanded.

"Well, I'm sorry to say I forget the number, but I fancy New Zealand would find him."

Blank bewilderment on the part of the enemy, followed, however, by the question:

"What's he gone there for?"

"Benefit of his health," answered Mr. Yabeley, ignoring all previous explanations. "Didn't I say so before? Doctor ordered sea voyage—said it was his only chance."

"When'd he go?"

"Last train last night—I mean first train this morning."

"I s'pose there's no chance of catching him up?"

"I'm—I'm afraid not," admitted Mr. Yabeley, shaking his head regretfully. "You see, he was going to take the express and travel right through without stopping."

Here the deceiver wiped the sweat of falsehood from his brow, while the deceived, suddenly giving way, sat down with a thud that almost made the cane-bottomed chair give way too—"And it was only re-seated the other day," was its owner's rueful comment—and burst into tears.

"His only chance, indeed"—referring to the tobaccoist's last lie but two. "My only chance you mean. Oh, I've been deceived cruel!"

The other person present was too painfully conscious of the incontrovertibility of this latter statement to do more than shake his head sympathetically.

"Why in the world don't she go?" muttered Mr. Yabeley under his breath. "Ain't I told enough lies to satisfy any reasonable woman?"

A sudden awful thought assailed him. That boy! He had quite escaped his master's memory during that last terrible quarter of an hour. At any moment he was liable to turn up and blast the fair structure of mendacity that had taken so much pains to rear. Something must be done, and that speedily. By fair means or foul the premises must be cleared, and, having none of the former at his command, Mr. Yabeley once more had resort to the basest duplicity.

"I've been turning it over in my mind," he commenced, leaning confidentially over the counter, "and—well, I don't know, but it seems to me that there's just a chance you might catch him after all, if you was to be quick about it."

Pausing to note the effect of the bait, he was encouraged on his downward course by the fact that though the disconsolate one's tears did not immediately cease to flow, yet it was evident that she was now sobbing with one ear open.

"You see," he continued, "he'd got to catch the express at Cowslip, and I says to him at the time as he'd got all his work cut out to do it."

The sobs had ceased, and it was plain that the victim was hanging upon his words.

"If only that boy don't turn up and no customer don't come to give me away, it'll be all right," was his inmost thought. "Now," holding up an impressive forefinger, "s'pose, betwixt you and me, as he misses that train, which there's many things unlikelier. There mayn't be another for hours, and he'd just have to hang about the station until——"

There was no occasion to complete the sentence. Giving her face a hasty and final polish with the corner of her shawl, she made as though to throw her arms round the tobaccoist's neck.

"Bless you," she cried, "you dear, kind soul! Bless you for those words!"

Mr. Yabeley dodged the embrace as he had the umbrella previously.

"Now, don't you lose a minnit," he urged. "And mind, he's a tall man with a bald head, and a brown overcoat with a velvet collar and a cast in his eye."

Mrs. Bundle collected her belongings, and was half-way to the door before the words were out of his mouth.

"Don't forget the velvet collar," cried the tobaccoist, following her to the door, "and it's his left eye."

"Oh, I'll remember right enough, and,

what's more, I'll never forget what you've done for me, never."

"Don't mention it," said Mr. Yabeley. "I'd have done as much for anybody. Don't you waste another second. Good morning, and—she's gone, she's really gone at last. Yah!" apostrophising the back of the moving mass, "call you Susy. Indeed, you—you boa constrictor! I should just like to hear myself."

It receded farther and farther, finally it turned the corner and disappeared like a vast black blot from T. Yabeley's mental horizon.

"Bless me, what a morning it's been!" he exclaimed. Then, looking up at the name over the door: "When I think of the lies I've reeled off by the yard, it do seem as though it ought to be Ananias 'stead of Timothy."

Whereupon, his mind reverting to the subject of the still partially closed shutters:

"Drat that boy!" forgetting with what leniency, not to say gratitude, he had regarded his absence so very recently, "I'll dust his jacket for him when he does take upon himself to turn up. I've a good mind to——"

All this time he had been gazing one way—that was up the street; now he turned to look down the street.

"I've a good mind to give him——"

Heavens! What was that? Three figures were approaching from that direction. One—masculine, juvenile, and corduroy clad with regard to the lower limbs—was easily recognised by his master. He was strolling along at an easy pace, engaging, as he came, in light and agreeable converse with two sable-clad female figures that walked on either side of him.

Mr. Yabeley's jaw dropped and his knees seemed to give way under him. Even had there been time, he lacked the capacity for flight.

"That's him," he heard the boy exclaim. "That's T. Yabeley—which T. stands for Timothy—as you was asking for. I'm afeared I'm a bit behindhand this morning," he went on, addressing his master; "but I've been a-drowning of some kittens. They belonged to our cat. There was six on 'em, and I drowned 'em one at a time. It was prime!"

The lust of slaughter glittered in his eye, and he was proceeding to details, when a prod from one of his gentle escort recalled him to a sense of matters of less moment.

"I heard these yer ladies enquiring for

you down street, and offered to show 'em the way."

Something in the tobaccoist's speechless glare made him quail.

"I guess I'll be taking them there shutters down," he remarked, sheering off and leaving the hapless T. Yabeley to his double fate.

Of the two fresh specimens of the opposite sex which now confronted him, one was tall, bony, and angular; the other was short, broad, and a trifle less aggressive-looking. Both wore deep black, and each showed a widow's cap inside her bonnet. Having looked him well over from head to foot, the tall, bony woman opened her mouth and observed:

"Mrs. Smallchick."

Whereupon the short, stout one, following suit, remarked:

"And Mrs. Longclose."

Mr. Yabeley, vaguely comprehending that this was introductory, stared from one to the other and murmured the formula:

"'Suitable for small tradesmen.'"

"Jest so," assented number one briefly.

"P'raps we'd better walk inside," proposed number two.

So Mrs. Smallchick led the way, and Mrs. Longclose brought up the rear; the tobaccoist being in the middle, in which position he only seemed to lack handcuffs to present the appearance of a condemned malefactor.

Having pinned him up against his own counter, they both opened fire at once.

"Me and Mrs. Smallchick——" began the short woman.

"Mrs. Longclose and me——" began the tall one.

Pausing simultaneously, they proceeded to indulge in mutual recriminations.

"You never will let me get a word in edgeways," was the former's accusation.

"You're always a-interrupting of me," was the companion comment.

"Well, I like that," from the one.

"Well, of all the untruthfulnesses," from the other.

"But there, I might have guessed."

"But there, I knowed how t'would be."

There was an interval of a second or two, at the end of which they made another attack upon their victim.

"You wants a widdier?" said Mrs. Smallchick.

"Which is to say a wife?" insinuated Mrs. Longclose.

"It's the same thing," snapped the former.

"Not at all," contradicted the latter.

"What was Mrs. Wilkins's own words? 'Here's a widder wanted immejit, which, as you and Mrs. Longclose is both widders by marriage——'"

"Mrs. Wilkins, she says to me, she says, 'Here's a gent's seen my advertisement, and's written to me for a wife, and seeing as you and Mrs. Smalchick is both on my books, to say nothink of living next door to each other; if I was you,' she says, 'I'd go over first thing to-morrer morning, as the situashun might suit one or t'other, if not——'"

"Which I've every respeck for you, Mrs. Smalchick," she says, "and I think it'd suit you to a T—that being the inishull of his Christian name, and——"

"Mrs. Longclose, ma'am," she says, speaking low and confidential, "never have I seen the finger of Providence pinting straighter than I see it pinting to you at this minnit. Mrs. Longclose, ma'am," she says, "I names no names, and I makes no illusions, but if ever there was anybody cut out by nature's own hand for the situashun, you are that person."

"When I was a gell," remarked Mrs. Smalchick, "pinting wasn't considered manners, and as to cutting out, strikes me nature couldn't have had much of a pattern to go by, or p'raps the scissors was blunt."

"Some folks," was the retort, "do seem to have been out on the cross to that extent, as act straightforward they can't."

Here Mrs. Smalchick looked at Mrs. Longclose and snorted, and Mrs. Longclose looked at Mrs. Smalchick and sniffed.

Meanwhile, the bone of contention had passively submitted to being wrangled over, which, considering the way he was hemmed in, was the only course of conduct open to him. And yet it seemed as though he ought to have some voice in the matter, though, up to the present, neither of the ladies had allowed him an opportunity of exercising it.

"Goodness only knows how they'll settle it between 'em," he thought. "Anyhow, they can't both have me."

By this time the shutters were down, but observation having shown the boy that his master's attention was too well occupied in minding his own affairs to be cognisant of the proceedings of his subordinate, the latter had strolled off, and was now agreeably employed in conveying a vivid impression of the kitten episode to a congenial spirit.

Within the shop there was a momentary lull while the competitors recovered their breath.

Mr. Yabsley took advantage of the same to make an effort to review the situation. Would it—could it be possible, by reverting to strategy, to escape from this second position of peril, in spite of the odds being so much against him?

But before he could do more than grasp the merest outline of a scheme, the onslaught was renewed.

"I'm sure the business seems to be all as I could wish," remarked Mrs. Smalchick, casting a critical eye around, "though I will say I prefer a corner shop as a rule."

"What I should call snug," observed Mrs. Longclose, looking about her with a proprietary air, "though p'raps not kep' jest as I should wish to see it. But then, what could you expect with no one to see after things?"

Here Mr. Yabsley was goaded into a primary but unsuccessful attempt at self-assertion.

"I don't know——" he began.

"Of course you don't, you poor dear man," interrupted Mrs. Longclose.

"No, indeed, it ain't likely for a minnit," interpolated Mrs. Smalchick.

"That's what we've come about, sent direct by Providence."

"By Mrs. Wilkins, and strongly recommended, which she's less likely to be took in than the other party."

"Mrs. Smalchick, ma'am, this is past bearing!"

"Then don't you bear it a minnit longer'n you're obliged, Mrs. Longclose, ma'am. There's the door handy."

"Which is just what you'd like, I've no doubt, Mrs. Smalchick, but I'm not sich a fool as I look."

"Looks is mostly deceitful, Mrs. Longclose, as I'm well aware."

"Really, ladies, really," the tobaccoist's voice was raised in expostulation. "Don't let us have any unpleasantness, pray don't. I assure you, I'm not worth it."

"I never said you was," replied Mrs. Smalchick, "but so long as the business is all right——"

"Of course, there's no denying the business is the first consideration," interrupted Mrs. Longclose.

"The fact is," went on Mr. Yabsley, running his hands through his hair distractedly, "what with one thing and another, I hardly seem to know what I'm doing. It isn't only the rates and

taxes over due, or being two quarters behind with the rent, or the bill of sale on the furniture. I might manage to get over that in time. But to think I should live to see myself bankrupt!"

"Bankrup!" was the double exclamation. "Why, you never mean it!"

Mr. Yabaley shook his head dolefully.

"Twopence three farthings in the pound, if that," he added with a groan, which it is to be hoped was one of contrition.

But there was a glimmer of suspicion in Mrs. Smalchick's eye.

"Why, the business looks all right, and you keeps a boy?"

"A boy! Ah!" from the boy's master, "that's where it is. I'm obliged to keep him. If I was to give him notice, I'd have to pay him his wages. It's cheaper to keep him on and owe 'em to him."

"Why, you old ruffyan!"

"Bringing us over here on a wild goose chase!"

"You ought to be horsewhipped, that you did!"

"You go answering advertisements, indeed! I should like to know what you mean by it!"

"A perfect man-trap, that's what you are, a-laying snares for the widder and the orphan."

"The truth is," explained the culprit feebly, "the truth is, I thought I might meet with some one with a bit of money, that'd set me on my legs again."

"Set you on your legs! I feel a deal more like knocking you off 'em altogether. Mrs. Longclose, ma'am, we've been deceived shameful!"

"Mrs. Smalchick, ma'am, I couldn't have put it better myself."

"I'm only a weak woman," exclaimed Mrs. Smalchick, towering a head and shoulders above the cowering Yabaley, "but when I think how I've been took in, I declare I could shake you till your teeth rattled in your head."

"Don't do that, ma'am, pray," he implored, "for they don't fit too well at the best of times. Think," and he groaned louder than before, "think of the escape you've had."

"He's right there," put in Mrs. Longclose, "oh, we've had a escape, a narrer escape. Think of our hard-earned savings as he'd have swallowed up."

"Swaller," cried Mrs. Smalchick, "he'd swallow anythink, that man. But there, if I stop another minnit I shall be doing him a injury. Let's leave him to his deserts,

and rub the dust off our shoes on the door-mat as Scriptor says."

With a final shower of vituperative epithets, they gradually departed. Mrs. Smalchick came back once to put her head in at the door, and salute him as a "disrepppytable old cockroach," but Mr. Yabaley, being by this time, as it were, morally waterproofed, merely groaned deprecatingly.

"I reckon I could hardly have told more lies to the square inch if I'd been putting up for Parlyment," he lamented some five minutes later. "It's perfectly awful how easy it seemed to come to me once I'd got my tongue in. They jest alliped off it like it was greased."

He tottered to the door, and looked out.

It was a fine spring morning, and the village street was wearing its most picturesque aspect; but to the tobaccoist's jaundiced eye the world was black and blighted with widows. The sky might be blue and flecked with clouds like the fleeciest Shetland wool, the leaves might wear their tenderest green, the tiled roofs blush their reddest and the windows wink roguishly in the sun; they winked in vain at T. Yabaley, who, after carefully reconnoitring, ventured to raise his voice sufficiently to summon the boy.

"Thomas," he said, "jest come and mind the shop. I'm fagged out. And, Thomas, seeing it's Saturday, you can put up the shutters early, and take a half-holiday. And, Thomas, if any one calls and wants to see me—any lady, you know—specially any one in mourning, say I've gone away for a few days."

The boy nodded, and his master vanished into his den, only to reappear in a few seconds.

"Thomas, here's your wages and twopence over, and if you like to say I've been a little queer in my head lately, why, I'd look over it for once."

Thomas nodded again, and grinned delightedly.

"You lemme lone, I'll akeer 'em proper."

Mr. Yabaley was a little taken back at the promptness with which his assistant prepared to carry out his hint.

"Don't—don't overdo it, Thomas," he entreated. "At least—that is—only if you find they won't go peaceable. My gracious! Who's that?"

It was only a customer for an ounce of shag, but Mr. Yabaley bolted into his retreat as though it had been a rabbit hole, and he its legal tenant.

"If this sort of thing is going to last much longer, Jacob," he remarked to the cat, "you'll be advertising for a situation next, for I believe another day would about finish me. Why! bless me! I never thought of that. I'll write directly to that woman Wilkins, and get her to cut 'em off at the main."

So seizing pen and paper he sat down, and hastily scrawled the following lines:

"T. Yabeley's compliments, and please not to send any more widows. P.S.—I've changed my mind."

To Mr. Yabeley's unspeakable relief, and Thomas's bitter chagrin, no more ladies in black appeared upon the scene before closing time; whereupon the latter, having put up the shutters and bolted his dinner—his master following suit by bolting the shop door after him—departed in joyful haste.

"Thomas," were the tobaccoist's parting words, "whatever you do don't forget to post that letter, and mind you're here to your time on Monday."

The first part of the afternoon passed quietly enough, and after a while Mr. Yabeley left off starting at the sound of approaching footsteps, and was actually beginning to read the paper with some degree of interest, when the clock, striking the half-hour, reminded him that it was time to put the kettle on for tea.

Having done so, he was about to resume his seat, when—a tap, light but distinct, at the outer door seemed to curdle all the blood in his body.

Jacob heard it, too, and turned one ear enquiringly in that direction.

"It's another of 'em," groaned the tobaccoist. "Well, anyhow, I needn't let on to hear."

It came again.

"Tap away," he exclaimed viciously. "I ain't going to let you in, not if you tap ever so."

Tap—tap—tap. Something in the steady, monotonous persistency of the sound made the cold perspiration break out upon his forehead.

Tap—tap—tap.

"This is awful. I ain't a woodpecker, nor yet a holler beech-tree, but if this is going to keep on there's no knowing whether I mightn't fancy I was either or both."

He looked at Jacob for inspiration, and Jacob looked at him, as much as to say: "Why don't you see who it is? It might be the milk or the cat's-meat."

Tap—tap—tap.

"Perhaps I'd better open the door half an inch or so, and say I'm out, and no knowing when I'll be back, or she'll be rousing the whole street."

Tip-toeing across the floor, he proceeded, with infinite precaution—and his heart in his mouth—to open the door the least crack in the world.

"Not at home," he cried tremulously through the aperture, and was about to slam and rebolt it when the words, "Lor, Mr. Yabeley, sir," in a familiar and ex-postulatory voice, caused him to reconsider his intention—his heart at the same time resuming its normal position with a flop of relief.

"Why, Mrs. Wardle, if I hadn't clean forgot all about you."

It was the woman, previously referred to, who "washed and ironed" him, and generally came in on a Saturday afternoon to tidy him up for Sunday.

"I dunno what's come to my head," he added, opening the door just wide enough for her to squeeze through; "seems like as though it'd been overwound." Then with an air of affected indifference: "I s'pose you didn't happen to see any one hanging about outside?"

But Mrs. Wardle hadn't noticed nobody.

Next day was Sunday. Mr. Yabeley was a little doubtful as to the safety of church-going; but finally decided to risk it, and would have enjoyed the service but for the unusual attentiveness and urbanity of the pew-opener, who twice came to ask whether he felt any draught from the ventilator, and generally smiled upon him in a way that caused him to recollect, with a nervous shudder, that though she was a pew-opener by profession, she was a widow in private life.

Was it possible that she had any inkling of what had happened? Mr. Yabeley chewed the cud of this reflection during sermon time, and very impalatable he found it.

Monday morning came. The boy was astonishingly punctual, being half an hour late to the minute.

About eleven o'clock Mr. Yabeley, who was dusting some of the articles in the window, was aware of a sort of eclipse, as though some dark, opaque body had intervened between him and the sun. Looking up, he was almost paralysed at the sight of a female in black, with her nose pressed against the glass, attentively

regarding him. As soon as she caught his eye she smiled and nodded.

The tobaccoist's jaw dropped, and there was a wild, hunted look about him that might have moved a heart of stone; but it had no effect upon the lady outside beyond moving her from the window to the door. Entering the shop, she was just in time to catch sight of her prey disappearing through the opposite door, which he secured behind him and then sat down to think.

At first he ransacked his brain hopelessly; the woman, meanwhile, rapping impatiently on the counter.

Then a means of escape, so simple that he was amazed it had never before suggested itself, rose up before his mind.

"Why not say I'm suited?"

At the same moment there came a tap at the door.

"Who's there?" demanded Mr. Yabsley.

"Please, sir, it's me," was the answer in the tones of Thomas.

He was a lanky, growing boy, and it was surprising what a narrow space he managed to squeeze through.

"There's a lady wants to see yer most pertickler," he remarked, with a backward motion of the thumb. "Come on approval, that's what she says, and I wants to know whether I'm to skeer her off or what?"

"Thomas," said his master, "of course you posted that letter on Saturday?"

"Oh, lawk!"

The delinquent fumbled for a moment in a trouser pocket, prior to producing the letter in an extremely dirty and much crumpled condition, with a piece of toffee still adhering to it.

"I been and clean forgot all about it."

"Thomas," with the calmness of despair, "you've been the ruin of me, I shouldn't wonder. However, you can tell the lady I'm much obliged, but I'm suited."

Thomas went accordingly, and Mr. Yabsley awaited the result with his ear to the keyhole. He heard the sound of voices, one rather high and shrill, with an accent of determination that boded ill. Then Thomas's knuckles applied for re-admission, and he was allowed to enter with the same precautions as before.

"Well," anxiously, "what did she say?"

"She says you may be suited, but she ain't, and she insists on a pussional intervoo."

"Oh, she does, does she. Very well then, Thomas, you can look after the shop. I'm going to bed."

All the rest of the morning there were

constant bulletins passing between the shop and the chamber over it.

"Ain't she gone yet, Thomas?" Mr. Yabsley raised his head from the pillow to enquire for about the ninth time.

"Not her, and what's more I come to tell yer as there's a couple more come by carrier's cart. I told 'em you was in bed, but they said as they reckoned they'd wait till you got up."

"Thomas," cried the tobaccoist, "I've been a good master to you, haven't I?"

"I don't say you ain't."

"Very well then; go downstairs and tell 'em not to be alarmed, but you don't like the looks of me, and, judging by the spots, you're afraid it's either measles or small-pock. Anyhow, say I'll be down directly, and I hope they won't think of going without seeing me."

A few minutes later the sound of the shop door banging violently was followed by that of retreating footsteps and gradually receding voices.

The boy came grinning to report that the charm had worked.

"Thomas," said the tobaccoist, sinking back exhausted, "you can put up the shutters, and if any one else comes, say I'm dead."

At the end of half an hour or so another tap at the door roused him from the state of semi-unconsciousness into which he was sinking.

"That you back again, Thomas? What-ever's up now!"

"It ain't Thomas, it's me, Mrs. Wardle, come to see if I couldn't do anything for you, and I've brought a little beef tea."

The beef tea was good. Mr. Yabsley sat up and disposed of it with relish. After which Mrs. Wardle rearranged his pillows and tidied up.

She was a comfortable, natty little woman, hardworking, too, and honest as the day, with a brisk sort of way about her that did you good. It did Mr. Yabsley good.

Having put everything straight and drawn down the blind, she was about to take her departure, when a sudden exclamation made her start.

"Lor, Mr. Yabsley, sir, are you took worse? Shall I run for the doctor? Is it in your back, or legs, or where?"

"I'm not worse, I'm better, a lot. It was jest a sudden— Mrs. Wardle, I declare I never thought of it before, but you're a widdier, ain't you?"

"Well, sir, you ought to know by this

time, seeing I've been one this ten year and more."

"Mrs. Wardle," propping himself on one elbow, "there's been a lot of women about the place to-day wanting me to marry 'em. I've managed to get rid of 'em for the present, but there's no saying when they'll be back again and carrying on worse'n ever. Mrs. Wardle, there's only one way of getting even with 'em as I can see. You've washed and mended and generally done for me for some years. S'pose you was to marry me and do for me altogether?"

"Misster Yabsley! I declare I never did! I'm that took aback as never was!"

"You know my ways," continued the ardent wooer, "and you'n Jacob have always got on well together. Somehow, it's jest struck me as I might do worse, and, anyhow, you'd be able to keep off them other harpies. And, Mrs. Wardle, the bands might be put up next Sunday, if convenient."

"Well, Mr. Yabsley, sir, though I should no more have dreamed of such a thing! Still, I don't know but what——"

"Then that's settled, and I'm very glad I happened to think of it. You can tell Thomas to take down the shutters, and if any one else should apply for the situation, you can say the vacancy's filled up."

A DOWNSTROKE.

By A. MOBERLY.

CHAPTER I.

THE postman trudging up the lime-tree avenue of Holme Royal in the bright sunshine of a June morning was made the victim of a daring outrage. A band of three desperadoes stood in wait for him at the first turning, the muzzle of a gun was pointed at his knees, and he was commanded to "Stand and deliver!"

"You may take me prisoner, Missy, and welcome, but I've got to be killed before I give up my letters, you know."

The bandit leader looked darkly at him from under the big newspaper cocked-hat that covered her yellow curls, and fumbled with the big sword stuck in her blue sash; while her aide-de-camp laughed at the joke, as only a red Irish setter can laugh, his pretty pink tongue curling and his feathery tail waving high. The third, more bloodthirsty, removed his thumb from his mouth, and was proceeding to

extremities with a flashing tin trumpet, but rescue was at hand.

"Hullo! What's this? Robbing the mail? Lucky I'm a magistrate. To prison with the lot of you."

Mr. Carteret stepped from out the shrubbery, picked up the second brigand and put him on his shoulder, took the letters and papers from the postman, and walked off whistling.

"Give the newspaper to poor Pat to carry," commanded the bandit chieftain rather breathlessly, as she trotted along trying to keep pace with her father's long strides. "He does so like playing at postman. There! Go find the mistress, good dog! Now Baby Claude may carry some, and then he won't put his thumb in his mouth."

"He won't take them. He hates the sight of a letter as much as I do."

"So he does. He put all his Cwistmas cards into his bwead and milk. Why does men hate letters, father?" pursued Cissie, who had a taste for philosophic enquiry.

"Got to answer them."

"But you doesn't. You let mother write your letters, just as I does for Baby Claude when he gets an invitation. Oh, there's mother!" and taking the lead—as the womenkind of the Carteret family were rather given to doing—she bustled up the verandah steps to where Mrs. Carteret awaited them, standing in the French-window of a bright little morning-room filled with roses and sunshine.

Roses on the walls, on the old-fashioned chintzes, in the big silver bowl on the table, stuck in the belt of Mrs. Carteret's white gown, and meandering all over grandmother's quaint treasures of china in the corner cupboards. Rose-scent wafting in with the sunshine and fresh air through the open verandah window. It was a room to make the veriest lie-a-bed forgive an eight o'clock breakfast.

"Seven letters for you, Mamsie. Are you glad? Why?"

"Of course I am. They bring news of friends and—and—all sorts of pleasant things," Mrs. Carteret answered, smiling. She was young, happy and pretty, one of those women to whom friends and pleasant things come by right of nature. She tore off two envelopes, while the butler brought in the coffee and omelette. Cissie scrambled into her chair, and Baby Claude drummed impatiently on the table with his spoon, making round eyes at the bread and milk.

"Here's—oh, a bill from the bootmaker at Crownbridge, and another from Vere and Oxford's"—Mr. Carteret was rude enough to laugh—"and a note from Jennie Trevor. Now we shall hear when she's coming. Five-thirty this afternoon. You shall go with father to meet her if you are good, Cissie—don't forget to order the luggage-cart, George. An invitation to a haymaking party at the Rectory; will Jennie be too fine and fashionable a young lady for that, I wonder? She was a regular romp seven years ago. Here's a dinner-party at the Cedars—that will dispose of every day she is with us except Thursday. What can we do then, I wonder?"

"I've got to drive over to Crownbridge to meet those lawyers in the morning. Suppose I take her? I can give her some luncheon at the 'Crown,' and show her the Minster, and then drive on to Bridge Park and see the kennels."

"They are sure to catch you and keep you to tennis and supper if you go to Bridge. You'll have a lovely drive home by moonlight."

"Aren't you coming, too?"

"Can't. There's a G.F.S. committee meeting on, and I have to preside, and, George, here's a notice about that charity. I wish you'd get elected churchwarden next year—or let me. We can't leave the management in the present hands. Now, Cissie, say grace."

Trivial—most trivial chatter. A commonplace, beautiful, happy little family scene; yet, as we treasure the toys and trifles that a loved dead hand has touched, so in days to come Mabel Carteret found herself dwelling on each idle word, each detail of the picture; solemn brown-eyed Baby Claude feeding seriously, Cissie discursive and important—very like herself as she admitted amusedly—and her great, silent, solid George, with his slow, indulgent smile lighting his handsome face whenever he looked at her. Pat on the verandah outside basking in the sun, an occasional glance or cock of the ear indicating the intelligent interest he was taking in the conversation.

The party soon broke up and dispersed. The children trotted away with nurse, George strode off to the Home Farm, Pat accompanying him affably as far as the end of the avenue, from whence he invariably returned to look after the house during the master's absence. Mabel, left to herself, started gaily on her morning's routine of inspection, from housekeeper's

room to stables, from conservatories to the pretty suite of rooms destined for her visitor, with perhaps a touch of extra particularity, in view of her guest's possible criticisms. Jennie, her oldest and best-beloved friend, had spent the long seven years since they had met studying life and enjoying it after the latest modern fashion of "the bright and beautiful English girl," while Mabel, in her placid and humdrum, albeit dignified existence, had followed her career with a mixture of astonishment and admiration, in which envy had no part. Deep in her simple, self-satisfied soul was fixed the conviction that to be the mistress of Holme Royal and the wife of George Carteret was a lot surpassing that of all other women—only she was concerned that Jennie should admit it. Her progress ended in the library, George's special haunt. It was cool and shady and silent. She put the few papers lying about tidily under the letter-weight, gave an altogether unnecessary dusting to the pipes on the mantelshef, and picked up a stray driving-glove that she found lying on the floor, putting it to her soft cheek in a foolish and entirely unaccountable manner. George's photograph hanging near her own peculiar chair caught her eye, and she laughed and almost blushed. "You're a darling!" she murmured to it confidentially. "You will think that I don't look older than Jennie yet, in spite of seven years' marriage, and am still ever so much prettier; and you'll tell me so, and you never say what you don't believe." Then she fell to remembering the days of long ago, when people told her that George Carteret was not young, or rich, or clever enough for beautiful Mabel Trent, and she had had but the one answer to give them: "He is the one man in the world for me, and I am the one woman for him." "And it was true, and every year has made it truer," said Mabel, smiling at the portrait.

Then a sudden knock at the door made her start guiltily away and seat herself hurriedly in George's great library chair. Only Pat, after all. He shoved the door open and marched in, tall erect, his beautiful amber eyes shining with delight, and a letter held softly in his brown lips—a square envelope with an address in type-writing.

"Oh, you dear dog! Where did you find it? How could they have dropped it?" And Mabel, without more ado,

opened it. It was so manifestly a circular that she had no hesitation in doing so, though it was addressed to her husband. George's hatred of pen and ink had passed into a proverb. Had it been even a private letter of the most confidential nature it would sooner or later have come to her, she knew, either to write or dictate the answer. Thus it was no scruple that made her stop suddenly in the act of tearing it open and re-read the direction: "To G. Norman Carteret, Esq., Holme Royal, Broxham, Loamshire."

"Norman." It was the name her husband used to be called by in his young days, but never since she had known him. When, by the death of his elder brother George, he became heir of Holme Royal, it was considered desirable that he should use his first name, and continue the line of George Carterets that had held the property for many generations. "Norman" struck her as unfamiliar and impertinent somehow, and set her against the communication from the beginning.

Thus it ran, in italic type :

"NORMAN,—I am in London, ill, poor, and so friendless that I must even come for help to you—to you who have most likely forgotten my very name, and believed, or at any rate wished to believe me dead any time these thirteen years. I have heard that you are married. I leave it to you to make my existence known to your wife or not. I shall not be the one to make trouble. Let me hear from you before the end of the week, unless you prefer that I shall come to you. Perhaps you may not care that your home should be haunted by a ghost from the past—your past. I can promise that, once laid, it shall darken your path no more. I have kind friends abroad, and if you will send me the means of returning to them, you shall hear no more of her who was once,—Yours,

"NORA VANE."

Mabel's face slowly crimsoned as she read, and her brows knit. What a letter! All the more repulsive from its crude clearness of type—addressed to her husband by a woman of whom she had never heard. A woman who claimed his past, who called him "Norman," who wrote in a tone of mysterious familiarity and defiance. There was no other "Norman Carteret," no cousin between whom and her husband any confusion could exist. A woman whom her husband had wished to believe dead!

Why? Thirteen years ago? That was before she had ever heard of or seen him, when she was in the school-room. And he? He had been a student at Bonn about that time, she remembered. It had been a freak of his freakish father to send him there, and to send for him home again a year or two after. Vane! Now she remembered the name. He had English friends there—a Mrs. Vane and her daughter, or daughters. They had a house outside the town, and were so kind to the young English students there. Mabel's lip curled. She thought she knew the sort of house, and lady, and daughter—particularly the daughter. They are to be found near several University towns. But how dare this Nora, after all these years, write as if—

—as if—
"George will explain it all," she declared to herself sturdily, folding up and pocketing the letter. "It's his affair, not mine." It was with an effort little short of heroic that she went through the rest of her morning's engagements without allowing herself to glance at the clock unnecessarily, or look down the long avenue by which George would return.

The luncheon bell rang at last. Cissie and Claude in their clean pinafores and newly-brushed hair were in their places, and the chicken had been carved before Mabel heard his voice in the hall. Not his voice only, unluckily. A neighbour, full of some stable disasters, had accompanied him home, and was to be dropped at his own gate when George drove to the station to meet Miss Trevor. After luncheon George left her to entertain his friend while he interviewed his bailiff, then the two men and their cigars disappeared stablewards. It was not till the dog-cart was actually at the door and Cissie demanding the driving-seat, that she could catch her husband for a hasty minute in the hall.

"George, here's a letter; just look at it and tell me how to answer it."

"Can't you do it yourself?" he asked, taking it with a comical grimace of distaste. Then his eyes opened wide as he read, and a look, first of incredulity, then of annoyance, crossed his face. He crumpled it into a ball and tossed it away into a corner.

"Answer it, not I! It's a fraud, and an impudent one."

"But who's Nora Vane?"

"No such person. Dead, years ago."

"Really. Who told you so?"

"The man who ought to know best. I'm coming, Harris—get in. Five minutes late. We shall keep Miss Trevor waiting."

"But, George, what do you mean to do!"

"Nothing. Write yourself if you like, and say so," and he was off.

Mabel picked up the crumpled ball of paper, smoothed it out, looking at it with less bewilderment and more disfavour than before. She remembered those people at Bonn perfectly now. They were musical, literary, or artistic, she thought—not a recommendation to the little Philistine. "If George had only stayed at home and gone to Oxford as an English gentleman should, there need have been none of this worry," she thought. "Anything may happen abroad." She had no shade of mistrust of her husband, only of the company into which he might have strayed without her being at hand to protect him.

"It must be some mistake about the death. It can't be a fraud, or she wouldn't have asked to see him. Well, she shan't." Mabel could vividly realise George's helplessness in face of a piteous appeal, and had already made a clean sweep of sundry damsels in distress, importunate widows and such-like, who used to beset the open-handed young Squire. She thought long and carefully. "I will see her myself. I shall be alone on Thursday. I will accept her offer of coming here. If she's an impostor she'll keep away altogether; if she is really one of those Bonn people, why then—it will be better to have her when George is safely out of the way," she decided. To take no notice might subject George to a fresh application. The affair must be ended, and promptly, and she was the woman to do it. To the real Nora she was prepared to behave generously, due explanation being given. So without further ado she despatched a note to the address given, regretting that Mr. Carteret's absence from home would prevent his seeing Miss Vane, and appointing Thursday for the lady's visit. Then she dismissed the disagreeable subject.

The five-thirty train duly arrived, and with it Miss Jennie Trevor—also Miss Trevor's big French trunks, and her tennis racket, golf clubs, violin and camera, her fox-terrier, banjo, fishing-rods, easel and sketching umbrella, and other necessities of life. Jennie was a very good specimen of the modern young lady, tall, smart, and many-gifted. Jennie was equal to rubbing it off though. She was a brilliant

young person, who carried her own atmosphere with her—or created one—wherever she went. The dinner-party given in her honour that night was the liveliest on record. The simple country men and maidens were quite astonished to find how brilliant they could be under the magnetic influence of the gay young stranger who sang them the latest song, told them the latest society gossip, and taught them the latest absurdity in after-dinner diversions.

"What charming friends you have, Mabel!" she exclaimed as she last departed. "I'm ashamed of myself for talking and laughing so much, and I've promised—oh, what have I not promised! To try Mr. Harris's mare—to photograph the Abbey—to row to somewhere. I must write it all down before I forget." She stooped to pick up some of the numerous envelopes with which Pat had strewn the floor in the exhibition of his last accomplishment, and which he was now conscientiously conveying one by one back to the library waste-paper basket. Mabel gave a little start as she saw the one in Jennie's hand.

"Remington," pronounced Jennie, looking at the address. "Very badly done, too."

"Why? Doesn't everybody write alike with a machine?"

"Not a bit of it. Some folks' typing is as bad as their writing. Mine was worse, I believe, the only time I tried it. This, you see, is not spaced properly—not room enough left for capitals—and look, the small 'n' has been struck every time instead of the 'm,' and the third stroke added after with a pen—just the blunder that shows most in your address. Well, now for my engagements. About fifteen for to-morrow, and a dozen for the next day. And the next!"

"That is the day you go to Crown-bridge with my husband, and I am left at home to my own devices."

CHAPTER II.

MISS TREVOR brought George Carteret's handsome pair of chestnuts home on Thursday afternoon, unaccompanied except by the groom, taking the awkward turn into the lime-tree avenue in a workman-like manner, and bringing the horses up with an artistic flourish at the front door exactly as the clock chimed a quarter to dinner-time.

The house was silent, and the hall seemed empty as she entered. Coming

suddenly upon Mabel's white face and dress in the library doorway, she came as near to a start and a scream as her well-trained nerves would allow.

"Where is George? I want him at once!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I was to tell you that somebody—you'll know all about it—somebody whose signature is wanted for some deeds, can't be in Crownbridge till to-morrow morning, so to save another journey Mr. Matthews, that nice old agent, is going to put him up to-night. We didn't go to Bridge Park. Mr. Carteret thought I'd better get home in daylight. Anything wrong? Children well? You looked so pale it startled me."

"Nothing wrong. I must see George at once, though."

"You can't go now, Mabel! You couldn't get home to-night—and there's nowhere for you to stay. The 'Crown' is full, we couldn't get a private room to lunch in. And the horses——"

"No, of course. They can't go out again, and there's nothing but George's hunter in the stable just now. I must write after dinner."

"Now, what is the matter?" Jennie asked herself as she hastily completed her dinner toilette; "she isn't ill, nor the children. Business, I suppose, but why can't it keep a day? She looks just as if she had been peeping into some Blue Chamber in our absence."

Mabel was herself at dinner, at least, all that a hostess should be, and Jennie was a discreet young person of vast experience, so a casual observer might have remarked nothing amiss at the pretty tête-à-tête dinner, or in the evening that followed; Jennie sitting in her basket-chair in the verandah listening to the nightingales, and Mabel in the softly-lighted drawing-room writing at her davenport till bed-time.

"George will not be home to-day," Mabel announced at breakfast next morning; "I am so sorry. We must ask Walter Harris to come with us to the flower show instead."

"I heard the groom go with your letter last night," Jennie answered placidly. "Cissie, am I to take your portrait or Pat's this morning?"

"George mayn't be home before Monday," Mabel went on. "He has more business to get through than he expected."

"What a pity! Do you think I might ride Champion while he is away? I'll take such care of him."

Decidedly, if there were anything amiss, Jennie would not be the one to notice it.

So two days slipped by, full of June sunshine and mirth, roses and haymaking, tennis and strawberries and cream, but on the third Jennie up and spoke:

"Mabel, when a place gets full of poisonous gas or vapours, what would you do?"

"Do? Open a window, I suppose, and let it out—or get some fresh air in somehow. Why do you ask? Is it a conundrum?"

"No, a parable. There are noxious fumes of some sort poisoning your moral atmosphere, I know. Can't I blow them away?" She glanced from Mabel's pale face to her untouched coffee. "I'm vulgarly inquisitive, I know I am. I can't help seeing that something is up, and I want to know what it is."

"What have you seen?"

"It began on Thursday. I thought it was just married folks' ways that made you look so miserable when I told you George couldn't come home, and that it was sheer affection that kept you writing that volume of a letter to him all the evening. But you never cheered a bit when you had got his answer, and have been going as in a dream ever since. If you were engaged you couldn't do more! Tell me all about it, dearie. You always used to tell me everything in the good old days, and you never repented it, did you?"

"No, Jennie, never! But I'm not wretched, though. Not a bit. I've no reason to be," Mabel protested stoutly. Then she looked wistfully into Jennie's bright face. "I will tell you all my troubles. You are so much cleverer, and have seen so much more of the world than I, you may see some explanation. George isn't good at writing, or he could give one directly. I wonder sometimes whether I have been blundering into a trap by my own obstinacy and self-sufficiency. But come into the library, we can talk quietly there."

Jennie picked up her knitting and followed her hostess. There was a locked despatch-box on the table, which Mabel opened in nervous haste, as if she feared she might change her mind. She took out three papers and passed one to Jennie. That astute young person read it without exclamation or enquiry till the end.

"Who is this Nora Vane?"

"An old friend of George's. Dead, he

assures me. He was for taking no notice of this, but as usual, I wanted to manage everything myself, and wrote telling her to come here and I would see her. So she came."

"I understand. On Thursday, was it not? What was she like?"

"A little woman; not young, and not quite a lady, I thought. She kept her veil down, and sat with her back to the light. But she says she is Nora Vane, and can prove it; and she says—she dares to say to me—that she is George's wife!" said Mabel, coming to the point with a vengeance.

"An attempt at extortion, of course."

Jennie's voice was studiously calm, but her knitting needles stumbled and clashed together, and the Kilburn orphan who got that sock found an unaccountable knot in his ankle.

"I was too angry and horrified to stop her. I thought she must be mad and I let her go on. Then she told me how George used to come to her mother's house at Bonn, and fall in love with her at first sight; and how her mother, having proper pride, sent her off as governess in an English family—governess, with that accent!—and George followed her to Ems, where they were married by the English chaplain, and then his father recalled him to England."

"Did she give you dates of these events? It seems as if it would be easy to contradict her."

"Oh, she had the dates of George's movements right enough, and showed me his letters to her from England arranging for her to follow him. He dared not ask his own people to receive her, but he worked upon the feelings of his aunt, Lady Margaret Wade, who befriended her, and kept their secret. Then she told me plainly that she was disappointed to find that George, instead of being the eldest son and heir, was dependent on a very severe tyrannical father. They wearied soon of one another, and agreed to part. She went to Russia as governess—saw her way to a brilliant marriage—and sent home news of her death as the best way of ridding herself of her husband. She didn't marry, lost her situation, came to great grief in some way, and found her way back to England. That is the story."

Jennie looked at her friend in amazement. Her cheeks were flushed with anger, and she spoke in a voice white-hot with indignation, but of confusion or alarm showed no sign.

"But you say she had letters——"

"A bundle of them. She wanted me to examine the dates and postmarks, but wouldn't trust them in my hands—and books with her name and George's, and a marriage certificate. I told her to take no further trouble to produce evidence, as nothing she could bring forward would weigh with me for an instant."

"My dear Mabel! And she——?"

"Lost patience and asked what would convince me, and I said my husband's word, nothing more or less," answered Mabel superbly. "Then she told me to take any two of the letters and show them to George and ask if he denied them. She shuffled them together and held them to me, and I took two."

"The two she intended you to take. Ah, I know how that's done," murmured Jennie. "May I see them?"

They were written on the rough grey paper George still preferred, in his usual telegraphic style, and unquestionably in his handwriting:

"DEAR NORA,—Awfully sorry not to have written sooner. No good news. Matter impracticable, so never even mentioned your name. Aunt Margy comes to-morrow. Keep up your heart. —Yours always,

"G. NORMAN CARTERET."

The second was longer:

"DEAR NORA,—Took Aunt Margy into our confidence. Wouldn't listen at first, ended by sending you her blessing. Start as soon as you can. Wouldn't do to come for you, I suppose, but I'll meet you at Harwich. Don't fret, all will go right now. Tell you all when we meet.—Yours,

"G. N. C.

"P.S.—Bring the Marriage certificate with you. Auntie says it won't do in England, but I know better."

Jennie's breath hardly served for a further question.

"And the certificate?"

"That seemed a regular one. 'George Norman Carteret, to Honora Baresford Vane.'"

"And you told all this to George? And said you believed him—'quand même'?"

"There was no necessity to add that," replied Mabel with dignity. "Here is his answer."

Jennie read the few lines on a sheet of note-paper :

"DEAREST,—Nora died years ago. If she didn't there's an awful muddle somewhere. Can't explain now. Home on Monday, I hope.—Yours ever, "G. N. C."

Jennie's imperturbability gave way.

"Mabel! And he never denies it!"

"Denies it! Why should he? His letter is enough. I know him."

"Glad you do," murmured Jennie to her stocking. "I don't."

"Married folks' ways" were getting too much for her. But a glance at Mabel's white face and dark-ringed eyes made her pull herself together with all her sharp wits at her friend's service once more.

"We'll assume that George has a perfectly satisfactory explanation of all this, then, only he doesn't feel equal to expressing it in writing. Can you tell me anything more your visitor said?"

"She begged me to reflect on my position if she put the case into her lawyer's hands; to consider the scandal, whichever way it ended; to think of my children. She offered to go back to Russia, leaving all her proofs in my hands for me to destroy when I chose, if I would but give her a hundred pounds for travelling expenses and promise her a small annual sum—"

"I knew that was coming—but you didn't! Not a sixpence, I hope!"

"I paid her fare and her cab from the station, of course, that was only right; but I told her that if her story had been true, she would have taken from me what no money could buy back. Then she got angry and said I had better think it over. I might put an advertisement in 'The Times' before that day week, unless I wished her to go direct to George—"

"Why hadn't she begun with him and insisted on seeing him first? It would have simplified the whole business so enormously. He would have paid handsomely to keep all this from you. She doesn't want to see him, and—yes!—you didn't happen to ask why she used a typewriter, did you?"

"No. Why shouldn't she?"

"Because she is afraid of his seeing her writing. She isn't Nora Vane and she hasn't a bit of Nora Vane's writing to copy, that's what it is. Just see how vague her letter to him is, too. She has nothing definite to threaten him with. She has

concocted that story and prepared those forgeries for your benefit only. Many a woman would have let herself be black-mailed for less."

Jennie's voice and spirits rose as her convictions grew. Mabel shook her head sadly.

"I am afraid of her, Jennie. Though I don't believe her, others may. She can annoy George out of revenge—raise a scandal in the neighbourhood—"

"Then we must be beforehand with her. We must hunt her down, frighten her, threaten to have her up for extortion, find her out and all about Miss Vane as well!" cried Jennie in the full swing of enjoyment. "Of course we can do it. Here's her address, the note and the envelope, that's something for a detective to go upon."

"Jennie! If it could be done!" Mabel echoed, taking fire from her friend's enthusiasm, filled also with righteous wrath and the desire to punish.

"Of course it can. I don't precisely know how to set to work, but I can tell you who does—my editor, Mr. Herbert Dudley, of the 'West End Review,' you know. By the way, he wanted to see me soon about a story of mine. Let's wire to him, order early breakfast, and go up to town by the nine forty-five to-morrow!"

CHAPTER III.

"I'VE thought of something more," Jennie announced suddenly. She had got her way, and the two friends were rushing townwards by the morning's express, with a carriage to themselves. "Can't we apply to Lady Margaret Wade if she is alive?"

"But she isn't. She died just before our wedding. She must have been a foolish, romantic sort of woman, I think. She actually married an actor—years younger than herself," said Mabel, with bated breath. "To be sure, he didn't live long," as if that somewhat condoned the offence; "but she always kept in his set—actors, artists, and that sort of people, you know. She would have been the very one to encourage a mésalliance."

"It was an artful touch to bring her in, wasn't it?" Jennie said thoughtfully. "Then here's another point. Do you see this letter has the same fault as its envelope—an 'n' in place of an 'm' all through! Looks as if it were the machine that was wrong, not the operator."

Mabel responded languidly. The cold

fit was following on the hot. Her courage was fast oozing away. She had misgivings as to the wisdom of her errand; didn't fancy the notion of the private detective, and wasn't sure George would approve. Mr. Herbert Dudley's name gave her some confidence. She never read his articles, but she knew that Royal Highnesses contributed to his magazine, and she was sure he would not lead her into anything unbecoming. Still, she wished herself back at Holme Royal many a time before they arrived at the office of the "West End Review," and were ushered into the editor's presence.

Miss Trevor had taken up novel writing, as she had gone in for skirt dancing or church embroidery in her time, but with not quite the same amount of success, and there was much to discuss before her MS. had a prospect of acceptance. She was unselfishly anxious to get to Mabel's business, and "rushed" her own with impolitic haste.

"Mr. Dudley, do you know a detec—" she had begun, when Mabel's face caught her eyes. She was standing near the editor's table, her cheeks pale with excitement, her eyes fixed on the open drawer from which Jennie's novel had been extracted. Some loose sheets of MS. lay at the bottom.

"Mr. Dudley, I must see the writer of this! Will you help me?"

He turned with surprise to the woman whom a moment before he had mentally labelled as "that handsome, stupid chaperon of Miss Trevor's."

"I can introduce you," he said doubtfully, gathering up the sheets and placing them in her hands. "She is a dear old friend of mine. That is a child's story, the prettiest you ever read, by Honor Bright."

"Oh, the darling! I love her things—or his, which is it?" exclaimed Jennie.

"A lady. Honor Bright is a real name. She is old, blind, and so crippled that there is little left of her but brain and hands. Almost friendless, too—"

Mr. Dudley stopped abruptly. Jennie had seized the MS. eagerly, and was turning the pages with flurried fingers. At the last her eyes met Mabel's and flashed in amazement. Italic type, and the letter "m" replaced by "n" from beginning to end!

"Tell Mr. Dudley, please," Mabel gasped, dropping into a chair; and Jennie, nothing loth, obeyed with discreet reticence.

"You shall see her at once," he declared.

"I have half an hour to spare. But don't be too sanguine. It is impossible that she can have anything to do with your adventures. Such an accident might happen to more than one machine—though it is unlikely. Do you mind walking? She lives close by."

It was a quiet, old-world nook of London to which he conducted them; a shabby, sunshiny square of tall, dingy houses. He opened a door with his key, and admitted them into a dusky, silent hall. As they followed him upstairs they heard the sharp, irregular click of a typewriter growing more and more distinct, till he opened a door on the first-floor landing and disclosed the operator. An invalid couch stood in the south window, and full in the sunshine lay, propped on pillows, a small, worn figure with a beautiful, bright, sightless face and two tiny, swift-moving hands. Near the couch, at a small table, a middle-aged woman with a pleasant, heavy face sat correcting some proofs. The room was sparsely, meanly furnished, except for a full-length portrait on the wall, some pots of choice flowers on the window seat, above which two canaries were singing, and the invalid's satin coverlid. She turned her face towards the door sharply.

"Dudley, my dear boy! At this time of day. And who have you with you?"

"Two ladies who want your help, godmother. Mrs. — ah — Carter, and Miss Trevor. I read her story to you last night, you know. But it's your typewriter they have come to see."

"And what do they want with my familiar spirit—my delight—my companion!" asked the old lady, caressing the keys with her worn, ivory finger-tips. "I love it, Miss Trevor. It brought me back to the world from which I thought myself cut off for ever. I never begin to use it without first saying grace, and praying for a blessing on the giver."

"Hush, godmother! don't be profane," said Mr. Dudley with a conscious look.

"I used to be profane, frequently, in the old days, I admit. When I had a secretary and heard my own compositions read aloud to me. Now this catches my thoughts as they run."

It was like any other Remington, except for the keys, which had the letters in relief so as to be legible by touch. It stood on a stout invalid's table across the couch. It had a cover with a lock and the key hung on a cord round her neck.

"And who uses it, except yourself?"

"Nobody! Never, never again," she exclaimed with energy. "Never since that fool of a doctor insisted on trying it one day, and Mary Burgess, there, hadn't nerve enough to knock him down and put it out of his reach. He banged two letters together and damaged one. But it can easily be repaired if I could but resolve to part with it for a time. It has got no worse, has it?" She looked full of apprehension.

"Not a bit. It really doesn't signify," Mr. Dudley assured her. ("We rather like it," put in Jennie.) "But could nobody possibly get at it?"

"How? I lock and unlock it myself, and the key never leaves me. And no one could touch it without my hearing."

"Oh, but do look at this," Jennie began heedlessly, then stopped in confusion, but Mabel took up the word, and for the second time that morning the story was told.

"She did it! There could be no one else. I know it must be the same! That hateful creature with the dry, nimble fingers like a monkey. That spy!" The poor little woman almost lifted herself up in her excitement.

"She means the nurse who came in to take my place when I had to go home at Easter," the attendant explained. "I had no idea how much she disliked her, or I would never have left."

"The spy!" the invalid went on with growing excitement. "I could hear her creeping about, peeping and prying. She searched my drawers, she read my letters. Do you think I couldn't feel when they had been pawed over? I felt her stirring about the room at night. I smelt the candle burning. She found my old diaries and read them as she sat beside me. I knew the creak of their backs. She drugged me one night, I know. She stole—oh, nothing of value, she was too clever for that; letters and papers from the box of Nora's things. I felt two were gone when I asked for it, but I can't tell which—only the bundle had been re-tied. She wanted autographs to sell, I suppose. And you say she tampered with this, too? Oh, blind, blind and helpless that I am!" The insult to the typewriter seemed the most grievous injury of all.

"Who was this woman?" Mabel asked.

"A nurse out of employment, who was lodging in the house. Miss Burgess had to go home suddenly on business, and

we took this woman as her substitute on the landlady's recommendation," Mr. Dudley answered. "She seemed to know her business."

"Oh, that she did! The highest walks of the begging letter writing profession, I should imagine. She was neater-fingered than you, Mary, and a woman of education. She corrected my proofs beautifully, and had a fine imagination of her own. She took me in completely at first by her knowledge of Nora's works."

"Nora? Nora who?" demanded Jennie breathlessly.

"My daughter, Miss Nora Vane," with a majestic wave of the hand towards the portrait on the wall. "Perhaps you know her best as Mrs. Cyril Houghton. That is considered a fine likeness of her as Lady Myrtille in her own play of 'Second-hand.'"

Mabel and Jennie gazed at the brilliant young face, and the remembrance of the pathetic little story of the gifted young actress's short, beautiful life, filled Jennie's eyes with tears.

"Was she Nora Vane? I never saw her, but I know her plays. I have acted in 'Wedding Favours' myself."

"That was the most popular, but I like it least. It was taken from a German one, 'The Marriage Certificate.'"

Light was streaming in upon Mabel.

"When did she come to England? Did you know my husband, George Carteret?"

"Norman," corrected Mrs. Vane quickly, "my own dear boy. It was he who helped Nora when she would come to London to seek her fortune—ambitious child. I could not come with her. It was the beginning of my blindness. But he moved heaven and earth and all his family to help her. Lady Margaret Wade took her up. Who's that? Dudley! don't let any one come in!"

There had been one or more unnoticed taps on the door. It now slowly opened, and George Carteret entered with a hesitating step.

"Mrs. Vane? They told me I should find you here. I have been searching for you for years. Why, Mabel, have you found her first, after all?"

"Look here," said Jennie to "her editor," "if you want to get back at once, let's go. Those three have hours of explanation before them, and they don't want us. Come along, and I'll tell you the whole story. It's a better one than mine."

THE VISION.

By SUSAN K. PHILLIPS.

"I HAVE never pressed thee, dear," he said,
 (The wild waves rage over Whitby Scar)
 "But thou know'st, for a month they sailed away,
 An' twice thou hast counted a year and a day
 With never a word of the 'Flying Spray.'
 For sure thy Jem is dead.
 "Thou wilt never hold me close and near,"
 (The wild waves roar over Whitby Scar)
 "But thy lot is lonesome, and drear, and hard,
 An' if thou wilt give me thyself to guard
 I'll never ask thee for more reward;
 An' I love thee very dear."

At last she sighed: "I will be thy wife,"
 (The wild waves thundered o'er Whitby Scar)
 For she'd learned to lean on his tender care.
 It is ill on a lonely path to fare;
 And never a woman but fain would share
 The roses and wine of life.

The wedding-day drew on apace,
 (The long waves call upon Whitby Scar)
 When there ran a lad to his cottage home,
 Who bade him "haste his ways and come,"
 And with piteous eyes and white lips dumb,
 She looked up in his face.

At last she whispered, "No wedding-day,"
 (The white waves surge over Whitby Scar)
 "Will ever bring me, dear, to thee.
 A vision came in my sleep to me,
 And I know he lives, though the angry sea
 Roars o'er the 'Flying Spray.'"

"I saw him—dear, it is hard on both"—
 (The deep waves roll over Whitby Scar)
 "I saw him weary, and worn, and white,
 But the pledge I gave in his hand shone bright.
 He kissed it under the young moon's light,
 And said, 'We keep our troth.'"

"An' he pointed to the crimson skies,"
 (The low waves whisper on Whitby Scar)
 "An' cried, 'My lass, it is not for long,
 Though youth is fain, and time is strong,
 And Heaven puts straight what earth makes wrong.
 A smile was in his eyes.

"I doubt I've used thee very ill!"
 (The grey waves wail over Whitby Scar)
 "But thou art tender and true to forgive,
 For the bit of time I has to live.
 To-night the bees have left my hive
 An' thou wilt be happy still."

Or ever another April came,
 (The blue waves laugh upon Whitby Scar)
 They laid the pale girl to her rest.
 And Will sought to lay on her quiet breast
 The heartsease flowers she loved the best,
 For her weary watch was done.

That very day on a tropic isle,
 (The ebb tide sobbed upon Whitby Scar)
 A lonely man lay down on the sand,
 A broken sixpence in his hand,
 And passed to the undiscovered land;
 His dead lips wore a smile.

OSCAR FAUSSET'S WILL.

By W. B. TYNDALL.

CHAPTER I.

"How beautiful, Oscar! Really you will have to make your will now."

The words were words of warning, but the scene at that spot seemed instinct with the very fullness of life. It was the

height of a hot June following upon a moist, growing spring. The flowers which bloomed around Kingscote House, and climbed up its deep-red walls, were at their brightest; the turf of the smooth lawns cut into terraces was as green and smooth as nature could paint it; the long stretch of descending woodland country, over which the eye wandered until it rested upon a boundary ridge of blue hills in the distance, was thick with foliage at its richest.

Three people stood upon the terrace before the garden front of Kingscote House—a sister and two brothers. They had come upon a pleasant errand. The youngest of the three, Oscar Fausset, by a sudden stroke of fortune, had come into possession of the house and many acres of the country over which he was looking.

An old man, who had hardly seen him during his lifetime, had bequeathed this slice of his estates to Oscar Fausset. To him, the youngest, because John Fausset, the elder brother, had already the place belonging to his family in the North, and Rosa Malcolm, the sister, was married, and so out of the dying man's ken.

The three looked down upon the brilliant country with different thoughts passing through their minds.

John Fausset was pondering upon the old barrack in Cumberland which he could scarcely keep up, its failing rents and the inherited mortgages, which weighed upon him every year with a heavier burden. He rejoiced in the good fortune of his brother, but how pleasant it would have been for himself if a little slice, a few thousands, had come his own way!

Rosa Malcolm, through the heat mist which shimmered over the fields, saw the glimmering vision of a country parsonage, rather shabby, rather poor, with a figure she loved walking in its ill-kept garden; and three little children playing, who were, like their house, a trifle shabby and not too well kept. Very well would it have been for her if some of the fortune had passed through the parsonage gate.

But as for Oscar Fausset, to whom all had come, his thoughts were less easy to read. They whirled about too swiftly between a small, mean studio, which already seemed to be disappearing in the distance, and a palace of art with the shape of Kingscote House. Perhaps between studio and palace, drifting upon the sea of his thoughts, there appeared at the surface the vision of the struggling country

parsonage which he vowed to himself to succour, and the stern old house besieged by its difficulties which he could now do something to free. Still the palace was first in his mind, and there was in it a ruling image not the least like either of his companions.

"You must make your will now."

"Indeed I must," he answered. "What a change! How could old Keswick have come to leave all this to me?"

"It is a beautiful place," said the elder brother. "I wish that I had half your luck, Oscar! What a contrast between this bright south country and that gloomy old barrack among the alate hills! Let me have Kingscote, and you shall have Castle Fausset with all the family gods to-morrow."

"Not I," said his brother, laughing. "You are a bad bargainer, John, and, as you say, I am a lucky fellow. Yes, Rosie, I must make my will. Fancy it being worth while. I feel changed already."

His sister hung upon his arm, and looked up at him fondly. Oscar had always been her favourite brother, perhaps because he had been of weaker health and stronger imagination than the other.

The three turned away from the terrace front and went together round the house. Everywhere was there some new possession to admire, some new plan for Oscar Fausset to make and for his companions to sympathise or laughingly to disagree with. The idea of ownership was so novel to him—a week was not yet gone since he had heard of his good fortune—that, looking at the place and knowing that it was all his, he could scarcely fancy that he was not in a dream. His imagination went rioting into the future. By his side he saw a figure unknown to his companions, and the steps of children kept pace with his own as he went to the upper rooms, and he imagined their laughter coming up to the open windows from the garden outside.

Early in the afternoon his brother and sister left Oscar Fausset to pursue the acquaintance with his new possession alone. He stayed at Kingscote House for a busy week, in which he was fully employed about the estate, making arrangements for carrying it on until he returned, and choosing an agent to represent him in his absence, and to take the future drudgery of the place off his hands. Here was to be a palace of beauty, and into his own part in it nothing sordid or worldly should enter.

In the midst of these visionary designs

he found time to go for a day to Princeton. Princeton, eight miles from Kingscote, was the nearest considerable town. There he spent a day with a solicitor, and returned to Kingscote House, having followed the suggestion of his sister, and made his will.

Mr. Gregory, the chief lawyer in Princeton, had merely a hearsay acquaintance with the Faussets. If he had known Oscar he would have protested against the provisions of the will which he was asked to draw. That document—from his knowledge of the affairs of the Fausset family—was not what he would have expected. But at a first interview it was too soon for him to interfere. There were other brass plates in Princeton which proclaimed rival solicitors, who would be willing enough to oust him from the lucrative business of the Kingscote estate. So he permitted his new client to sign a document of which he could not approve, and trusted to the ripening by neighbourhood of their future acquaintance to induce him some time in the future to modify it.

Oscar Fausset returned to London well-pleased. The untidy studio, in which for the last few years he had lived and worked, bore for him an air of novelty after the glories of Kingscote. He looked curiously at his own sketches lying about the room, at the big canvas upon the easel, and near it upon the floor the palette with its uncleaned brushes. The mean fireside, the screened-off bed, the faded window-curtains, even the roar of the streets and the grey London twilight outside, already seemed to him like the vanishing recollection of a dark dream from which he had suddenly sprung wide awake.

He straightened the gas-pipe over the chimney-piece, drew the curtains across the window, lighted the gas and looked round him at the familiar place which had been peopled by so many bright dreams, darkened by so many disappointments, and which had suddenly become so hateful to him. A bundle of letters lay upon the table. He tossed them aside one by one unopened, until he came to an envelope which bore the postmark of Princeton. It was a copy of the will which he had made there. Lighting a pipe, he sat down by the naked grate, and began to run his eye over the document. It was short and to the point, embodying what he had intended and making clear enough the injustice which, as the lawyer thought, it would effect. Here is the epitome of it.

To a few old friends various small legacies; to John Fausset five hundred pounds; to Rosa Malcolm, his sister, two thousand pounds; and to Clara Geeson, spinster, daughter of Captain James Geeson, "the residue of the estate of which I am now possessed or shall hereafter become possessed."

Yes; that very night he would see her. In a few short hours he would be by her side. He had thought out his plans every day for the last week, and they had come to this.

First, he would place the copy in her hands as something which it would be a trust to her to keep for him. Some excuse would rise to his tongue when the moment came. The insecurity of his lodgings, the value of the document, his own carelessness, which was between them a butt of common chaff, would carry him through.

Then, when she had taken the paper, that which he told himself had long been an ill-kept secret between them should at last be revealed. He would bid her open the will; side by side they would read it, and she would know how much he loved her. As soon as possible they would go down to Kingscote, and, like another Lord of Burleigh, he would show all that she had gained through him.

Clara Geeson saw Oscar as he entered the ball-room at the house of Lady Havers. She was struck by the change in his appearance. Usually he lingered before he could summon courage to approach her. But to-night he came at once and quickly to where she was sitting. She looked at him as he threaded his way through the room. Somebody stopped him as he came, and seemed to be very insistent on taking him by the hand. She could see that he bore the delay with scant patience.

"How happy he looks to-night!" she said to herself. "He has sold a picture, I suppose, or got a commission. About fifty pounds' worth of happiness, as his market goes. What a blessing is the artistic temperament! Down enough generally, but by the least puff blown above the steepest heights."

That night Miss Geeson happened to be a little bitter. She owed her darker moods more to her way of living than to her own temperament. Her lines had not fallen in pleasant places. She was the daughter of a man born to a fortune, who had let his desires outrun his means, and now lived by his wits. She had been left motherless so

young that she could not be said to have known a mother, and the life which she had led of late—vacantly brilliant abroad, at home of discomfort and almost poverty—had hardened and hurt her. These circumstances had given to her really great beauty a bizarre tone which marred it. Of late her eyes had become a little too daring, her ways a trifle loud, her voice somewhat careless.

A more complete contrast to Oscar Fausset could not be found, but it was the very force of the contrast which conquered him. He would have laid the world at the feet of this Cleopatra. In her were centred all his wishes and hopes and artistic dreams. Now that he had come to her side he was happier than 'she had ever seen him. He met her glance boldly, took the empty chair next to her uninvited, and altogether behaved more like a man, and less like a dreamer, than she had ever known him. She looked at him with curiosity.

"You have some good news," she said. "Tell me what it is. Whom are you going to paint?"

"No one," he answered, "that I have heard of. Orders hang fire, and my studio is choked with my rubbish. What do you mean?"

"What do you mean yourself?" she replied, "by looking as if you were treading on air, and were ready to knock the stars with your head?"

"An old simile," he said. "Has one no right to look happy, where every one seems to be so happy?"

He hugged himself in the knowledge that as yet she knew nothing. His secret had been well kept, though, to be sure, he had been congratulated on his way to her side, and he had feared that she, too, would know. And this thought permeating his mind showed how sure he felt of her, how great his trust in her was.

It took him some little time to manoeuvre her away from the crowded ball-room. But at last, sauntering together through the room, they made their way down a passage to a conservatory which, lighted and warmed, made a pleasant harbour for the flirting or the wearied.

So far his dream was being fulfilled in truth. Here was the very place for which he had wished. The scent of the flowers pleased his senses; their colours, mingled and confused by the shaded glow of the electric lamps, made a fitting frame

for the figure by his side. He let his gaze rest on her for a moment—on her face with its daring beauty subdued by the soft light; on her queenly figure and the dress with its heavy folds which became it so well. For a moment only. He felt that if he looked too long his courage would slip away from him, and to-night, if ever, it must be screwed to the sticking point. He drew two chairs together, and, as they sat down side by side, he held out the envelope towards her.

"Will you take care of this for me?" he said. "I have no place to put it. It is of importance, and I should feel safer if it were in your keeping."

Upon his own ears the bald words fell coldly, but his hand shook as he offered the paper to her.

His companion noted the trembling hand.

"In my keeping," she said, "and why? Surely, Mr. Fausset, you can take care of your own documents of importance. What is it?"

"No matter. It is enough that it is of great importance. It will be safer in your keeping. Do take it. I have no reason to give. It is a whim of mine."

Clara Geeson turned half-round and looked at him. There was a fever of eagerness in his face, the paper was shaking in his grasp like a wind-stirred leaf. She could not understand the situation, but her life had taught her never to lose a chance. She took the envelope and began to read the address.

"You are not to look at it," he said. "At least not yet."

"Very well," she answered. "How yielding I must be to-night to obey such a mysterious behest!"

The words seemed to him a good omen. The bosom of her dress was covered by a complicated mass of lace. It seemed the happiest moment of his life when he saw her hide this paper—just as he had told himself that she would hide it—among the lace which clung round her.

Fate could not have fashioned for him a fairer opportunity. His chance had come and not a soul was near them. Before she well understood his intention, he had seized her hand and was speaking, he knew not what words of love and entreaty.

Upon his mind and hers were painted two different pictures. He saw Kingscote House, as he had seen it a week ago, brilliant in the sun of midsummer. They two were standing upon the terrace, and looking together over the bright country

which stretched away from them to the blue hills in the distance.

But the picture which Clara Geeson saw was tinted with no such glowing colours. She saw a poor studio which was untidy with canvases and smelt of paint; a life in dreary lodgings; a long waiting upon fortune which might never come; a weary time of disappointments and postponements which she knew that her nature could not endure.

She liked this boy well enough. He looked very handsome now as he gazed at her. She had flirted with him as she had flirted with many others. But she did not love him, nor, at that time, anybody else.

Her decision was made at once; and the words, however kindly spoken, struck down at a stroke the hope which had seemed to him the very foundation of his heart.

For Oscar Fausset, a builder up of dreams until they appeared certainties, the revulsion of feeling was too hard a blow. He went, he knew not how, from the house, leaving her where he had spoken.

It was not until he had returned to his studio that thought enough came back to him to remember that the copy of the will was still in her possession. But the remembrance passed away from him as not worth thinking about.

He rose next morning after a sleepless night, feeling as if he were wearied out by a long illness. He was himself astonished by the haggardness of his own face. The familiar surroundings irritated him. A picture which he had begun before he went down to Kingscote stood upon an easel. It caught his eye, and he went and looked at it. The sketch had pleased him. Now his ambition seemed to be dead, and, knocking the canvas sideways with his hand, he sent it and the easel with a clatter to the floor. The sound aroused him. If he stopped among these familiar objects where everything was remindful of a life which was now closed, he would die. He dragged out a portmanteau, packed it hastily, and taking down a "Bradshaw" from the book-case, sat with it in his hand, wondering where he should go. The advertisement of an hotel in Liverpool caught his eye. He would go there, and thence, when he had bought his outfit, to America for a time.

But before he went he would repair one mistake which he had made—a mistake springing out of that other and greater error which had left him, in the midst of

the first blush of his good fortune, caring for nothing. He sent a letter to Mr. Gregory, the solicitor at Princeton, stating his desire to have destroyed the will which he had left in his possession.

The answer reached him in the hotel at Liverpool. He had taken his berth in a ship which was to sail for New York the next day. He was prepared to start, and only waited for the letter from Princeton. With that the last moorings which held him to his old life would be cast off.

It had happened that the solicitor was away from home when the letter reached his office. His son carried out the instructions which it contained. Here is the answer :

"DEAR SIR,—We beg to inform you that in accordance with the instructions contained in your letter we have to-day, in the temporary absence of Mr. Gregory, senior, destroyed the will left by you in our custody. We shall be glad to hear from you whenever you have come to a decision as to a fresh will, and remain, your obedient servants,

"JOHN GREGORY AND SON,
"Solicitors, Princeton."

The business-like conciseness of this short note pleased Oscar Fausset. All was now ready for his departure, and he found himself looking forward to the voyage with a measure of hope, which stirred for a moment the black shadow which had fallen upon him.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN FAUSSET came down to breakfast at Castle Fausset in a cheery mood. The morning was fine. His brother-in-law and his sister were staying with him. Rosa's presence always brightened the dreary old place, and he liked to hear the voices of the children as they rambled in the grounds. He remembered, as he listened to them calling to each other in the shrubbery, what a delight in his own young days its overgrown walks and natural hiding-places had been to him. He turned over his letters while his sister poured out his coffee, and began opening them.

"How I wish you were always here, Rosie," he said. "It makes the place so cheerful. The voices——"

He stopped in the midst of the broken sentence, and turned white. His sister looked up at him. In his hands was a

letter. It was trembling so that he was scarcely able to read it.

"Terriblenews, Rosie," he said. "Terrible news. Yesterday morning poor Oscar was found dead in his bed in an hotel in Liverpool."

The voices of the children were hushed. There were no more sounds of joy round Castle Fausset that morning. John Fausset sat alone in his study, while his bag was being packed and the dog-cart got ready. At first his thoughts only rested upon the brother who had been so suddenly called away, but gradually he could not refrain from thinking how much this sudden stroke might mean to him. Oscar had gone just when ample fortune had come to his hands, and before he had had the time to stretch out his fingers to take it. Probably he had made no will, and the point to which all his thoughts tended as he drove to the station and throughout the journey to Liverpool, was that the old house, which had been encumbered during the lifetime of his father and his own, might be freed at last.

He had sad duties to perform in Liverpool of which little need be said. The medical evidence convinced the coroner's jury without difficulty ; and John Fausset, after the funeral of his brother, was free in less than a week to take his homeward journey. He took the dead man's papers and effects with him. Almost the first which he examined was the letter from the Princeton solicitors relating to the destruction of the will.

This letter astonished him. He was surprised to learn that Oscar had lost so little time in making a will, but he could not in any way account for its sudden destruction. At present there was no explanation for this, nor for the presence of his brother in Liverpool and the steamboat ticket which was in his pocket-book. However, the will was destroyed—there seemed no reason to doubt that—and both he and his sister, whatever were the contents of the short-lived document, were now, as next of kin, the heirs to the dead man's estate. Still there seemed to John Fausset a mystery about the whole affair which he was anxious to unravel.

After a few days' stay at Castle Fausset, he determined to go down to Princeton. There he could see the solicitor, who would be able to tell him all about the matter, and afterwards he could drive over to Kingscote House. John Fausset found Mr. Gregory seated in the snug private

room of the Princeton office. The old solicitor received him with a clever mixture of sympathy and cordiality. The new client was welcomed, but the old one was not quite forgotten.

"I could not understand what influenced your brother to make such a will," Mr. Gregory said. "To me it seemed most unjust, and I hinted my opinion to him as broadly as I dared. You and your sister, Mr. Fausset, and especially you, were left quite out in the cold. By the way, was there anybody—ahem—in short, was your brother in love with any one at the time of his death?"

"Oscar and I," John Fausset answered, "have seen but little of each other for the last two years. He has been in town, and I chiefly in the country. Yet if there had been anything of that sort I think that I should have heard of it, and I never did."

"Then who is Miss Clara Gesson?"

"Gesson," the other replied, "Clara Gesson. The name does not appear in any way familiar to me. I do not think that I have ever heard of her."

"She must have been a great friend of your brother, though. If his heart had failed three weeks instead of a fortnight ago, whoever she is she would have been a richer woman to-day."

"Really. You astound me. I cannot at all recall the name. But the will is destroyed, is it not?"

"Not a doubt of that, sir. My son did it with his own hands. Did you not find Mr. Oscar's copy among his papers?"

"No. Was there a copy? I saw nothing of it."

"No doubt he destroyed it himself when he sent his instructions to us. A good thing. I am glad it is out of the way. It was a most injudicious testament."

John Fausset gave the necessary instructions to the solicitor for obtaining letters of administration to his brother's estate, and, after a flying visit to Kingscote, returned to Castle Fausset. His sister was still there, and he told her with as little satisfaction in his voice as was possible of their sudden access of fortune.

Naturally, to John Fausset and his sister, when the first sharpness of their grief had passed away, the horizon seemed to be bright enough. But unseen by them, and in a quite unexpected quarter, a cloud was forming which appeared likely to envelope them in a blacker darkness than before.

The first inkling of trouble came in a letter from Princeton.

"I do not quite understand this note from Gregory," said John Fausset, looking across the breakfast-table at his sister. "He wants to know if I have any evidence that the copy of Oscar's will was destroyed; and asks me to make careful search among any of his papers which I may have in my possession. Now what does he mean by that, Rosa?"

"Only some legal formality, John. What else can it mean? There is no use in a copy of a will, is there?"

"Certainly none, as far as I know. But what can make Gregory so anxious to find it?"

In a few days a second letter arrived from the solicitor, which, though it offered no explanation, was very disquieting to John Fausset.

The letters of administration had been applied for, but had not been obtained. It would be very convenient if Fausset could come down to Princeton to consult with Mr. Gregory upon a difficulty which had suddenly arisen.

A coldness came over John Fausset as he read the formal words. Nothing as far as he could understand but the discovery of another will could now draw back the cup from his lips, and it seemed impossible that his brother, in the few hours which had intervened between the letter authorising the destruction of the will and his sudden death, could have made a second disposition of the property. Still, try to reassure himself as he would, there was evidently something amiss, and John Fausset went the long journey to Princeton with a quaking heart.

He found Mr. Gregory in his office. The solicitor's manner was not reassuring; he was very grave.

"We have applied for administration, Mr. Fausset," he said, "as I wrote to you, and we find that a caveat has been lodged."

"A caveat?" said John Fausset.

"Yes. A firm of solicitors whom we know, and by reputation not well, have stopped our application."

"I do not understand what you mean. How could they stop your application? There is no other will, is there?"

"That is what I have brought you all this way to ask you, sir. Can you answer the question?"

"I cannot think it within the bounds of possibility. My poor brother must have been struck down within a few hours after receiving your answer that you had de-

stroyed his will. If he had intended to make another, why should he have troubled himself to write to you? The second will would have invalidated the first."

"Just so," replied the solicitor. "Just so."

A sudden thought struck cold upon John Fausset's heart.

"Are you sure it was the will," he said, "and not the copy which you destroyed?"

A civil little smile played about the corners of the solicitor's mouth. He lifted a speaking tube attached to his desk and called down it:

"Tell Mr. Miles that I should like to see him."

Miles Gregory appeared at once. He bowed to the client at the informal introduction which his father made in the words:

"Miles, this is Mr. John Fausset. He wishes to ask you if it was the will of the late Mr. Oscar Fausset which you destroyed or merely a copy of it."

"The will, certainly," the junior partner answered. "The signatures which I cut from it are in that safe. See, here they are," he continued, opening a drawer and taking out a slip of paper. "Oscar Fausset and two witnesses, the signatures of my father and myself."

"The signature is undoubted," said John, looking rather sadly at his brother's handwriting. "Would not the copy also be signed?"

"No," said Mr. Gregory. "It was an accurate copy carefully made, but there was no necessity to sign it."

"Then where does the trouble come from, and how can it be serious?"

"We do not yet know," the solicitor answered. "But we shall presently learn. I thought it better to see you so that you might be able to assure us that no other will had been made. Are you certain that your brother destroyed the copy before his death?"

"I have no positive evidence. It was not among his papers. It seems natural to me that he should have destroyed it. What use would it be to him or to anybody else?"

"Yet I wish we had direct evidence," said the lawyer. "Matters will develop themselves in a few days. Are you going to stay in Princeton, Mr. Fausset?"

"Can I go over to Kingscote? What is my position there?"

"You have no legal right in Kingscote House at present, though there is nobody with the power to turn you out."

"Thanks. I will remain in Princeton." As John Fausset left the room, Mr. Gregory turned to his son.

"Miss Clara Geeson has the copy," he said. "I wonder who and of what sort she is. Mark me, Miles, we are in a difficulty here. There is trouble ahead."

John Fausset took rooms in the inn at Princeton, and remained there in anxious suspense. He was glad when his sister joined him. She came with her husband, hoping to find out for herself more than her brother in his guarded letters had cared to tell her. Her presence did Fausset good. Her disbelief in such injustice and her inability to comprehend that there could be any law with power to deprive them of their inheritance, when once the will had been destroyed, braced his nerves and gave him strength. He was much more hopeful when the solicitor sent for him. Rosa and he went to the office together.

"There is trouble," said Mr. Gregory. "As far as we can learn, a copy of the will has been found."

"What then?" said Fausset. "If it is only a copy, surely it is valueless."

"That depends," the lawyer answered. "The business is in acute and not over-scrupulous hands."

"But the will was destroyed," Mrs. Malcolm said. "And that is an end of the matter."

"The law moves cautiously, my dear madam, and does not settle matters quite so quickly. Suppose that it had been destroyed accidentally——"

"But my brother's letter shows that such was not the case."

"Or illegally?"

"What then?" John Fausset asked.

"Why then—mind you, I do not say that it is so in this matter, but still there have been cases and it has been done—then it is quite possible that a copy of the will might be admitted to probate."

"Do you mean," said John Fausset, "that now, though my brother has given definite instructions to have his will destroyed, and though these instructions have been carried out, this copy, which has been accidentally preserved, can be used as if it were his valid will?"

"There is that possibility, I regret to say," the solicitor answered. "It is a delicate point, and I cannot pretend to decide it. I have asked you to come to me to-day to propose that we should go

together to London to consult an eminent authority on this subject. I have already written to Mr. Fischer, Q. C. His word in such a matter is the law. He can receive us the day after to-morrow, if you are so inclined."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Malcolm. "We will both go. I cannot credit such injustice."

The heart of John Fausset sank within him as he listened to the Princeton solicitor explaining the state of the case to Mr. Fischer. The eminent Queen's counsel listened for a few moments, then he stopped Mr. Gregory.

"You say that your son destroyed the will of the late Oscar Fausset?"

"Yes."

"Was Mr. Fausset there at the time?"

"How do you mean?"

"Was he present in the room at the time of the destruction of the will?"

"No, certainly not. The will was destroyed at Princeton. Mr. Oscar Fausset was then in Liverpool."

"Do you know this copy to be authentic?"

"If it is the one which I caused to be made in my office and checked with my own hands."

"Then you cannot go into court."

Mr. Gregory looked sadly into his hat; John Fausset seemed to shrink up together in his chair; Mrs. Malcolm, only, rebelled against the death-sentence.

"Do you mean," she said, "that this copy will run as if it were my brother's will?"

Fischer went to a bookcase and took down two volumes. He opened one, and put his hand directly upon a page which he showed to her. In it she read that for the destruction of a will to be of effect, it must be destroyed in the presence of the testator. Then he opened the other book and pointed out decisions in three cases. Seeing that with her dazed eyes she could make nothing of the print, he read the three extracts to her in sonorous tones. As she listened she found only the slender consolation of knowing that, though she had thought her brother and herself were the two most unlucky persons in the country, there had been at least three people who, by the interpretation of a law designed to meet quite another set of circumstances, had been plunged in exactly similar misfortune.

"What are we to do?" said Mr. Gregory.

"That is not my affair," said the Q. C. "I can only give my opinion upon the law?"

"There is no hope!"

"You cannot go into court. But if I were in the place of your clients, I should put a bold face upon it, bluster about the fight you are going to make, and hope to obtain a compromise."

"Thank you," the solicitor answered, "we will take up no more of your time."

"What did you say?" said John Fausset, as they came out into the street.

"I said, sir, that I have a fool for a son."

"No!" answered the other. "It is fate. He could not have reached my brother before his death, if he had started at once for Liverpool."

With such small consolation they parted.

CHAPTER III.

At Aix-les-Bains spring is a season of smiles and tears as elsewhere. But, though the snow-gusts and rain-storms are long in going, nowhere are the sunny days fuller of promises. On a brilliant morning in mid-April John Fausset stood at the door of his hotel. The house was at the foot of the market-place and faced the mountain. The crowd which passed before him was very novel to his sight.

The sound of the confused cries of the sellers in the market-place; the sight of bright colours and quaint garments, of the white hotels and the pretentious bathing-establishment; and above all the clatter and noise, the silent, clear-cut cliffs of the snow-covered mountain rising calmly into the blue sky, made up a scene which gave him a new interest for the first time for months.

John Fausset had passed a winter of anxiety. Now, in early spring, Kingscote House seemed as far away from him as ever. The action had not yet been brought into court, and no compromise had been agreed upon. He had determined to leave England for a few weeks, and had broken his journey at Aix-les-Bains on his way to Rome.

Leaning against the porch of the hotel and surveying the novel scene which displayed itself before him, he already felt less harassed. The English-speaking waiter had detected his nationality and was hovering near him, flicking the dust with a table napkin from the little white tables set close together under the awning.

Presently John Fausset felt somebody

brush by him, and saw a lady pass down the garden of the hotel and take her way into the market-place. He watched her as she stopped at a stall and bought some flowers, and walked slowly on out of his sight amongst the chaffering fruit-dealers and sellers of small ware.

"Who is that lady?" he said to the waiter. "Is she staying here?"

"Oh! yes," the waiter answered, "since some days. An English *mees vairey jolly*."

"Jolly!" said Fausset, thinking of the tall and rather stately figure which had caught his eye. "Very jolly?"

"Jolly," said the other, "*vairoy well*. What d'ye call 'im? Pretty, *vairoy pretty*."

"Ah! and is she here alone?"

"No, *m'aieu*, but it is the same thing. She is with her father. He is ill during much time, *vairoy invalid*."

"Indeed. What is the matter with him?"

"One says it is the *podagre*."

"The what?" said Fausset.

"What d'ye call 'im?" said the waiter, showing his gleaming teeth. "It 'ave 'im by the toes."

"Oh!" said Fausset. "The gout. And he is here to drink the waters. What is his name?"

"*Saysong*," the waiter answered.

"Eh! *Saysong*? Curious name! Do you mean Sassoon, waiter?"

"*Vairoy well, m'aieu*. You are right. *Saisoong*—that is it. *Vairoy difficult* for pronounce."

John Fausset found no difficulty in making the acquaintance of Miss Sassoon. It was easy to manœuvre himself into a place next her at the table d'hôte, and he found her quite willing to talk to a fellow-countryman. After a few days, Fausset found himself accompanying her upon the morning ramble through the market-place, and from thence a walk upon the slopes of the mountain followed as a matter of course.

The father did not make his appearance. It seemed that the gout had him, as the waiter said, pretty tightly by the toes. For this Fausset was duly thankful, and the daughter seemed to have no regrets. There was a fascination in this informal friendship; in the snug talk at dinner surrounded by strangers; in the walk in the crisp morning sunshine, or the scramble up the steep mountain paths until they touched the first fringe of snow, and pretended that they dared to go no further.

Week after week Fausset delayed his departure for Rome, until the time drew near to which he had limited his tour, and when he had determined to go back to London and fight out the vexed question of his brother's will. But somewhere above in the transparent blue sky, unknown to him, a bolt was forging, which in its fall was to change all his life, and perhaps to supersede the jurisdiction of the law courts.

The change began with an adventure. More than once of late, Fausset and Miss Sassoon, growing more daring, had passed from the bare mountain-side by devious tracks, and had stood together upon what they chose to think was eternal snow. But spring reigned still in Aix-les-Bains. Later on, under the hot sun of summer, much of this snow would rush rumbling down the mountain cliffs to swell the lake below. Already the increasing heat was beginning to have its effect, and more than once they saw the cloud of white dust which marked the track of an avalanche.

It was from this cause that their adventure came. They were standing together upon a narrow path which wound, half-protected by a ledge, round the side of a cliff, and were looking down upon the miniature town below them. Suddenly the air was full of a rush and rattle; a momentary darkness enveloped them. By an almost involuntary action Fausset flung one of his arms round his companion, and held her against the cliff, shielded by his own body. He was just conscious of a sense of shock, of being buffeted by a power which he could not resist, until blackness fell upon his eyes and the light of day swept away from him.

When he awoke he was lying upon the cliff-path, half covered by snow, and his companion was kneeling by him, holding his head upon her knee. He looked up into her face and met her eyes looking into his, full of sorrow and anxiety for him. At last he struggled to his feet. Below him was the gulf down which the avalanche had plunged. The overhanging ledge of rock which had broken the force of the falling snow was all that had saved them. But he was more hurt than he had thought. A piece of rock hurled down amid the snow had lacerated his right arm, and his back and loins felt as if they had been crushed. It was a difficult struggle for him, leaning upon the arm of his companion, to get down the mountain paths. When at last, almost exhausted, he reached

the hotel, the doctor ordered him to bed and kept him there for a week.

A great disappointment awaited him when he could go downstairs and sit under the awning in the hotel garden. His first thought was to ask the waiter about the Sassoons. The answer annoyed and surprised him.

"The m'sieu 'ave recover, and zay 'ave lef' Aix zese five days."

Still more vexatious was it that their destination was unknown. They had gone on a tour, the waiter said, through Italy, and where they might be now was for him—a shrug of the shoulders.

Fausset could get no more information from the hotel manager. The friendship which had so charmed him had made an abrupt ending. There was nothing for him to do but to make as quick a recovery as he could and go back to England.

There, still suffering from the physical shock which he had undergone, and as much from the soreness of heart which had been added to it, he passed a miserable month trying to force the matter of the will to a decision, but continually foiled by the dilatory tactics of the solicitors who were against him.

"It is a good sign," said Mr. Gregory in his office at Princeton; "but it surprises me. The delay is all from the other side. They cannot feel safe. I should not wonder if something were saved after all."

The monotony of waiting was at last interrupted for John Fausset by an urgent letter from his sister. She was in London, and wanted to see him immediately. He found on going to her hotel that she had received a letter which perplexed her.

The letter was anonymous. It said that the writer earnestly wished to see Mrs. Malcolm upon the subject of the late Mr. Oscar Fausset's will, and that such an interview, if granted, would no doubt lead to a settlement of the matter in dispute. The desire was added that the interview should be with Mrs. Malcolm alone.

"It is most mysterious," John Fausset said, "most mysterious! I wonder who the writer is. You ought not to see him alone. Let him say what he has to say before Gregory and me. We cannot have any hole-and-corner compromise in a matter like this."

"Yet, John," his sister answered, "it looks like a chance. And it would be so useful if we could save something. Can it not be arranged?"

"Alone?"

"Well, at first. You and Mr. Gregory, if you liked, could come in while it was going on. There would be nothing to prevent you. Your presence would not be likely to thwart the compromise if it were once broached."

To John Fausset this seemed a very simple plan, and feasible if not quite fair. Still, he was dealing with opponents who, he was long assured, were altogether unjust. To set such a snare in ordinary circumstances would not have been possible for him. But here were people who were trying to make capital out of the sudden death of his brother, and obviously against the dead man's wishes. Any weapons were fair against such combatants. The end of his thought was to agree with his sister's scheme. The old solicitor, unwilling to see the prize slip away from him, gave his consent to accompany Fausset.

At the time appointed for the interview Mrs. Malcolm sat in a private room in the hotel, awaiting her visitor. As the clock marked the appointed time, the door opened and a lady was ushered in. Mrs. Malcolm rose in surprise. She had been bracing herself for a struggle with some keen-minded, unscrupulous lawyer, come for the purpose of overreaching her. With a woman it seemed that the whole affair at once took a different aspect.

The new-comer was tall, dressed in mourning, and veiled. She stood where she had stopped on entering, a yard or two from the door.

"I am Mrs. Malcolm. Did you write desiring to see me?"

"Yes," said the other; "it was I who wrote. I wished to give you this."

She brought out her hand from under the cloak with a long envelope in it, and held it towards Mrs. Malcolm.

"I do not understand," the lady replied. "Who are you? And what is this?"

"When you have this you will not care to enquire who I may be. You had better take it. It is what you have long desired."

How Mrs. Malcolm would have acted she did not know. At that moment her surprise was so great that she could not think. This interview was so utterly different from what she had expected that she found herself dazed and without the power to act. Here was what might be the disputed copy of the will offered to her at a distance of a few yards, and she could not make a step, or put forward her hand to take it.

In the midst of her bewilderment the door opened, and John Fausset entered with the solicitor. There was a moment of awkward silence. Mrs. Malcolm remembered afterwards that she saw the extended hand of her visitor tremble as the two men looked at her.

Gregory broke the silence. His question was the same as Mrs. Malcolm had put.

"Who are you, madam?" he said. "And what may this be?"

"Never mind," was the answer. "While you can get it, take it. I may repent."

The voice touched a chord which vibrated at once through Fausset's memory. He sprang forward.

"Miss Sassoon!" he said. "You here! What is the meaning of this? Why did you leave Aix so suddenly?"

The visitor raised her veil and showed him the face which he had last seen when, battered and half-fainting, the doctor had led him into the hotel at Aix-les-Bains.

"Forgive me," she said, "if I allowed you to deceive yourself. The name by which you called me was not mine. I was lonely at Aix, and my name would have put an end at once to our pleasant friendship. Pardon me if I allowed a mistake which gave me some happiness. Then you saved my life. I owe it to myself to be at peace with you. Here is the matter in dispute between us. Take it, and let me go. I am Clara Geeson!"

John Fausset stepped back. His mind flew to his first morning at Aix. The stirring scene, the brilliant sunshine, the snow-capped mountain, and the waiter flogging the flies from the marble tables, and struggling with the English language. In the man's mispronunciation all the mistake had occurred. He and his enemy had sat and walked and talked together, had flirted and thoroughly enjoyed the company of each other, until a chance incident had deepened the feeling between them, causing her flight and his own sullen retreat to London.

Now she stood there with the treaty of peace held out in front of her, and he could not take it.

Mr. Gregory came to the rescue.

"I beg your pardon, young lady," he said, "but I do not quite understand all this. You are Miss Geeson, and you are Miss Sassoon. We have long supposed you to be our enemy, and Mr. John Fausset hails you eagerly as his friend. We are at this moment prepared to meet you in the law courts and you come here

with the bone of contention in your hand, begging us to take it. What does it all mean?"

Clara Geeson smiled sadly enough. In her black dress, and with the softened look upon her face, she was very different from the bold, hard beauty, who had driven Oscar Fausset from her feet.

"That you had better take it while you can get it," she said; "and leave me to go my own way in peace."

"And your father. What will he say to this sudden surrender?"

"I am free. My father is dead."

"Dead?" cried John Fausset.

"He died at Como three weeks after we left Aix-les-Bains."

There was a short silence, during which the solicitor looked searchingly at the girl. Since he had taken up this case he had made himself conversant with the affairs of the Geeson family. He knew thoroughly the raffish adventurer and his method of life. He knew how hardly the daughter had lived. He knew the law; that she held a fortune in her hand if she cared to take it; that she now stretched forth her hand to give it up. He knew the greatness of the sacrifice, but he could not understand the reason for making it.

"Are you left very rich then, Miss Geeson?" he said.

The girl intuitively felt the knowledge of her questioner.

"I am provided for," she said evasively.

"In what way? Come, come, Miss Geeson. You must be frank with us, and I shall be so with you. I know that your father can have left you nothing. How are you provided for?"

The girl's eyes sank. The sacrifice which she was making was plain to her. The strain of the interview was breaking down her nerve.

"I have a situation," she murmured, without raising her eyes. "I am provided for."

Then John Fausset was carried away by an impulse of which at his age he should have been incapable. He ran forward and flung his right arm round Clara Geeson, holding her as he had held Clara Sassoon upon the mountain above Aix. The copy of the will fluttered down upon the floor.

"Come, come, Mrs. Malcolm," said Gregory; "let us go. It seems to me very likely that there is going to be a compromise after all."

One morning, not very long afterwards,

Mrs. Rosa Malcolm gave to Miss Clara Geeson quite a charming little locket set with pearls and diamonds. Two hours later Mrs. John Fausset presented to her sister-in-law a deed of gift of exactly the amount which she would have inherited if the copy of Oscar Fausset's will had never been preserved.

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION.

BY MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER I.

IF there was one thing Selford was more proud of than another, it was its Convalescent Home. It was quite new; its erection had been the Jubilee commemoration that approved itself to Selford; and it was the only one in the county.

These facts will explain the profound interest that sat on the brows of seven men gathered together in Selford one spring morning. For these seven were the committee of the Convalescent Home, and they were gathered to decide a point of infinite moment to that establishment: the appointment of a new matron. They were assembled in a room with dark wire window-blinds to each of its three windows, and a collection of neat japanned boxes grouped in symmetrical order on shelves around the walls. There was a worn mahogany table in the middle of the room, round which the seven were sitting; and there were two clerks in an outer room, each ardently engaged, at this moment, in drawing the other on his blotting-paper.

Clerks and blotting-paper, table, blinds, and room, were the property of a little man in a long coat, who sat on the right side of the chairman at the top of the table.

The chairman was the Vicar. Why the Vicar always was elected chairman on these occasions, when he was the worst man of business in Selford, the rest of the committee best knew; or rather, they did not know, as they had more than once frankly owned. "It seems the proper thing to do," Mr. Norton would say, with a deprecating wriggle of the skirt of his coat. Mr. Norton was the little man at the top of the table.

The Vicar beamed benignantly at the table through glasses which, being put on at the wrong angle, were just out of his proper line of vision, and thus caused him

to slant his gaze upwards. He was tapping the table feebly with a pen, and evidently had something to say, but a trim, neat man with an alert air at the opposite end was too quick for him.

"I should like it to be understood, gentlemen," he said, in a decided voice, "that I, for my part, am ready to place perfect confidence in these testimonials."

"And coming from you, Doctor, we think a lot of that!" struck in another member of the committee. He was a short man with red hair, wearing a black coat that sat so uncomfortably upon him about the sleeves as to shadow forth the idea that it was not a garment he customarily wore. This was the fact. Mr. Mott was a grocer; "in a large way of business," he himself would have added. And shirt-sleeves were his comfortable daily wear.

A little murmur of incoherent acquiescence followed from a short man with an amiably smiling face, the manager of the Selford bank. It was echoed languidly by a middle-aged man by his side, who considered that acquiescence was the only reasonable course for a man of peaceful intentions.

"Twenty-nine!" said the chairman oracularly, after Mr. Mott's speech and its echoes had subsided. "Twenty-nine is——"

"A great deal too young!" The words were very quietly spoken. They came from the seventh member of the committee. He was sitting between Mr. Mott and the bank manager.

It is a frivolous comparison to make, but there was in Mordaunt Dennison's personality, to an imaginative mind, an ever-present suggestion of the hero of that most pathetic of myths, Beauty and the Beast.

He was very plain; "ugly" would have been the word used by every woman in Selford. The effect of an awkwardly broad forehead, high cheek-bones, a heavy mouth, and a chin that threatened to recede, was heightened by the dull complexion that made the whole of the clean-shaven face one brick-red sort of hue. It was redeemed only by a pair of singularly frank and direct blue eyes; but even they were ill-set—much too sunken, beneath ragged and scanty eyebrows. He was also rather short, and heavy in figure. The suggestiveness lay not in his actual plainness alone, though; there was something about him that carried its perhaps fanciful appropriateness further; and this something was a certain frankly modest consciousness of all

these disabilities which was by no means without dignity.

By way of response, the whole committee turned to Mordaunt Dennison and stared at him in deliberating silence. He placidly supported his chin in his hand while he waited for them to speak.

The Vicar was the first to do so.

"Too young, you think?" he said, with a surprise in his accents that was perhaps meant to make up for the lack of originality in his rejoinder.

"Too young, you think, Mr. Dennison?" echoed Mr. Mott, with the air of one who brings deep thought to a subject.

"You think Miss Kerr too young for the post?" said Dr. Vinter tersely.

Mordaunt Dennison took his chin from his hand, and laid the latter with a characteristic gesture on his knee.

"Yes. I think it a mistake to entertain the thought of appointing her for a moment," he said. "The position demands a woman twenty years her senior. Surely, a glance at that," he pointed to a large platinum photograph that lay in the middle of the table on a little heap of papers, "is enough to convince you without any further words from me."

These words seemed to present the chairman with an idea. He drew the photograph from the middle of the table, and took it in both hands.

It was that of an extremely pretty woman. She was wearing the most coquettish form of nurse's dress possible, and her eyes seemed absolutely to smile out of the picture into the good Vicar's glasses.

"Such a sweet-looking person!" he murmured.

Mr. Norton took it out of the Vicar's hand gently.

"So charming!" he said, with a contented wriggle. "Really, with all respect to Mr. Dennison, I do not see how we could do better."

"May we ask you to state your objections more definitely, Mr. Dennison?" said Dr. Vinter.

"Certainly!" was the answer. "In the first place, a woman of that age and appearance is not likely to give due attention to her duties."

"My good fellow," broke in the doctor impatiently, "would she have Wilson's testimonial if she hadn't done so at St. Peter's, do you suppose?"

"I cannot answer that," pursued Mordaunt Dennison calmly; "of that you are,

of course, the better judge. But what I have to say is that London is one place and Selford another."

"Quite so!" murmured the Vicar, in a harmonious acquiescence quite untinged with irony.

"And therefore," went on the objector, "the situation is different. There this young woman was naturally surrounded by people, and her time was fully filled up with work. Here, as you all know, gentlemen, her duties will be light, and she will be sure, in the absence of the stir she has been accustomed to, to seek for new acquaintances. And is it likely, I ask you, that so young and attractive a woman will be judicious?"

"It is not impossible," said the doctor grimly.

"By no means," Mordaunt Dennison answered, "but most improbable. And I therefore think that Miss Kerr's application for the post of matron to the Convalescent Home should be negatived without delay."

The lethargic man, by name Mr. Henderson, here threw in another murmur of acquiescence. His strong point was a dispassionate equity.

"Dennison, my good——"

"My dear Mr. Dennison——"

"Perhaps Mr. Dennison will reconsider——"

This trio of speech was simultaneous. It came from the doctor, the Vicar, and the bank manager. It was the doctor who went [on, the two others retiring modestly.

"My good fellow," he said, "you are making difficulties, it seems to me. Here is a woman, possessed of every qualification we could wish for. We want energy, she is young and strong; we want experience, she comes from one of the best training centres in London; we want cheerfulness, for the patients' sake, she sends a photograph of a face it does one good to look at; her terms suit us; we want her immediately, and she is willing to come any day. Now, begging your pardon, Dennison, would any one but a fool turn such an applicant away?"

The doctor's words had grown rather breathless towards the end, and his voice died away in a concerted little chorus of approbation.

Mordaunt Dennison rose. Apparently what he had to say demanded a standing position.

"I agree with precisely one-half of what you say," he began abruptly. "We do

want energy, skill, and cheerfulness; you are quite right there. But it is possible to procure them without combining with them beauty, coquettishness, and inexperience—three wholly unnecessary adjuncts," he added, with a touch of sarcasm. "Which adjuncts you will assuredly find yourselves burdened with if you engage Miss Kerr."

Therewith he sat down very quietly, but the attributes he ascribed to Miss Kerr had been so emphasized by him as to penetrate vaguely to the outer room, and there to cause one of Mr. Norton's overworked clerks to express to the other a disturbing wonder as to "what Dennison was alanging the rest about."

The emphasis also penetrated to the Vicar's inmost sensibilities, and roused there an uncomfortable suspicion which did at times just struggle into life in his mind, namely, that something was expected from him as chairman. He was vaguely wondering whether he should tap forcibly on the table with his penholder, or whether it was expected of him that he should say "Order!" when his doubts and difficulties were cut short by Dr. Vinter, who started to his feet with a movement that jerked the table.

"It is time this thing was settled one way or the other!" he said. "Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that the question of Miss Kerr's engagement be at once put to the vote."

Mr. Mott and Mr. Norton rose almost before he had done. Mr. Norton sat down again with a wriggle; and Mr. Mott said, ponderously, that "he begged to second the motion."

The Vicar pulled himself together, if not rapidly, at least steadily. He dropped the penholder, and proceeded to set in motion the time-honoured British machinery for deciding doubtful points. Ten minutes later Miss Ethel Kerr had been elected matron of the Salford Convalescent Home by a majority of six votes to one.

CHAPTER II.

"So I have thought it well to give you a simple explanation, Miss Kerr, that you may quite understand any temporary brusqueness in our good friend Dennison."

The Vicar was standing half in and half out of a doorway at the side of the entrance hall at the Convalescent Home, with the words "Matron's Room" painted across the panels of its door.

"Mr. Dennison was opposed to my appointment, do I infer?"

The voice came from within the room, and was sweet, and prettily modulated.

"Very much opposed indeed," the Vicar replied cheerfully. "He voted against you. He was sure you would be incompetent, as you were young; and also—but I must definitely state that he was and is quite alone in his ideas," here the Vicar attempted a bow which was hampered by the door; "he thought you too attractive—too pleasant-looking. We all entirely disagreed with him," continued the good man emphatically; "entirely! For which I'm sure we're all most thankful. We congratulate ourselves—we are delighted to find, in fact, that he was most mistaken. But I am sorry to say I must take my leave; I have a funeral at four." Without waiting for any response the Vicar precipitated himself out of the Home and down the hill towards Salford.

Left alone in her room, the owner of the pretty voice buried her head in a sofa cushion, and broke into a paroxysm of laughter. Then she sat up, dried her eyes with her handkerchief, and tried to compose her face.

Miss Kerr was even prettier than her photograph. The lines of the platynotype had conveyed, very truly, the outline of a small oval face; large eyes; a straight, retroussé little nose; a prettily curved mouth; and firm little chin. But they could not convey the delicate colouring, bright as a young girl's, that contrasted so strikingly with the smooth white forehead; nor could they give the dark Irish blue which made the great smiling eyes so beautiful in smiles and repose alike. And there could be in the photograph no hint of the soft fairness of the hair that was so demurely coiled up under her cap.

She was wearing to-day one of the same big frilly caps that she had worn in her photograph, with frilly strings tied in a bow under her pretty chin. Her dress, in its severity of straight blue serge folds, spotless cuffs, and white linen apron, accentuated all the bright liveliness, and colour, and vivacity in the face and figure that wore it. And it seemed at the same time to emphasize by its plainness all that was youthful in her slight, well-knit figure. Miss Kerr might have been twenty-nine, but she looked much more like nineteen.

The room round which she glanced was pleasant enough. It was nearly square in shape, and there were in it two wide

windows. Opposite the nearer window was a fireplace, this afternoon containing a small bright fire. The sofa on which Miss Kerr sat was close to the fire. It was a pretty little sofa, covered in the newest of cretonne. Scattered about the room were two or three inviting basket-chairs, and small tables. There was a writing-table, which looked, in spite of daintiness in all its appointments, very practical and business-like, in the window opposite the fire; and there was a great cage of canaries in the further one.

There were pictures on the walls; and there was on the table a glass of violets. Everything bore traces of the graceful finishing touch which only a womanly woman can give to a room, and which in itself is comfort.

Miss Kerr had been established at the Selford Convalescent Home for four days only; and it had only taken two of those days to transform the bare outlines of her private room into what the youngest member of the staff, Nurse Rose, described as "a really lovely place."

Once more Miss Kerr rubbed the tears of laughter out of her eyes; and then putting her little handkerchief into her apron pocket with a quick movement of a firm, strong hand, became suddenly grave, and a quick frown clouded her forehead.

"Incompetent! Too young for my work!" she said musingly. "And pray why should this man, whoever he may be, sit in judgement on me?"

"Come in!" she added, in answer to a knock at the door.

It was opened by Nurse Rose, a little woman with bright dark eyes, and a pleasant smile. She had a card in her hand.

"Matron," she said, "Mr. Mordaunt Dennison has called. Shall I bring him in?"

Miss Kerr stretched out her hand for the card; the frown just showed itself again on her forehead, and then a little flash came into the blue eyes.

"Four, Gray Street," she read, half aloud. "Nurse Rose," she went on, looking up quickly, "your people live here. Who is this Mr. Dennison? What is he?"

Nurse Rose cast a furtive glance towards the door.

"Mr. Dennison?" she repeated, with evident surprise in her tone. "I don't suppose you've been down Gray Street yet, though. His shop is on the right-

hand side as you go towards the church—a big bookseller's."

"His shop!" repeated Miss Kerr, with an indescribable intonation. "Ah! Yes, Nurse Rose, bring him in, please," she added. "And you might see that some tea is sent here, will you? I suppose I had better give him some."

The last sentence was spoken to herself. Nurse Rose had left the room with flying footsteps. A moment later the door opened again, and, unannounced—for Nurse Rose, having conveyed him to the door, had left to see about the tea—Mordaunt Dennison entered.

In spite of his plainness and heaviness, Mordaunt Dennison was never awkward. He was too absolutely free from self-consciousness to be awkward. The first thing that struck Miss Kerr, and it struck her with a curious astonishment as belonging to "a tradesman," was his dignity of manner. She found herself unable to do quite what she had intended. Yet her manner was chilling enough as she rose from the sofa and said, with the gesture of a princess at least:

"Mr. Dennison, I believe. Pray sit down."

Mr. Dennison did sit down; concealing with successful ease the fact that he had been prepared to shake hands. He sat down in the full light of the lowering March sun as it streamed through the further window. And in that light Miss Kerr perceived him to be what she mentally specified as "the most frightfully plain" man she had ever seen.

There was an unusual stiffness about Mordaunt Dennison, but it came from no realisation of her point of view regarding himself. On the contrary, it came from his own realisation of the fact that Miss Kerr was far prettier than her photograph, and quite the most beautiful woman he had ever seen; and the stiffness made his manner almost freezing, as he said:

"You find your rooms here comfortable, I trust?"

Miss Kerr was nonplussed for a moment. His voice, like his dignity, was, to her, unexpected. Also, it was difficult to maintain a cold and crushing demeanour to an individual who expressed his appreciation of it by using the same himself.

But she collected herself in a moment. This man must be shown at once his place and her knowledge of it. For a mere tradesman—a tradesman who had dared to object to her—to sit there cool and

collected while she felt at a loss, was not to be borne. She would "dispose of him" at once, she said to herself.

"Thank you, yes," she replied coldly. "It is very good of you to give yourself the trouble to come and enquire as to my feelings about them, in your business hours."

She accompanied the words with an emphasis that was a covert sneer. Miss Kerr was more or less a "great lady" by birth, and she knew as well as any other of the set she was born into how to sneer politely.

But the occasions on which, through life, she had used this accomplishment might have easily been counted up on the fingers of one hand, and the fact that she found it necessary to do so now was a curious testimony to the influence the personality of the stranger "tradesman" was exercising on her.

A slight flush made Mordaunt Dennison's plain face plainer yet. But it was not perceptible to Miss Kerr's eyes, and no single other trace of any discomposure was visible about him.

"My time is my own," he said quietly, "and I am glad to place any of it at your service."

He paused. Miss Kerr apparently had no response ready. She played with the frill of the sofa cushion nearest to her. Mordaunt Dennison meanwhile seemed to change his tactics slightly. The stiffness gave way to a simple, self-possessioned dignity.

"I waited until to-day," he went on, "thinking you would scarcely be prepared for visitors earlier; but the transformation you have effected here has indeed been rapid and complete."

He accompanied the words with a glance at the pretty room that was meant to make them into a compliment. A spirit of absolute rudeness rose in Miss Kerr. To have her sneer ignored had irritated her more than she knew; to have it condoned, so to speak, and put aside was more than she could bear. She dropped the frill of the cushion, and turned so as to face Mordaunt Dennison more fully.

"You will pardon me," she said in a sarcastic tone, "if I fail to understand how the satisfactoriness of the arrangements I make for my personal comfort can concern you, Mr. Dennison. But since you are so good as to think that they do, I am indeed gratified to have satisfied you in this particular. I understand I am likely to do so in no other."

"Indeed!" Mordaunt Dennison said

slowly, and turned his direct eyes with the word full on Miss Kerr's face. The absolute coolness and apparent indifference of the tone and gesture had an effect on Miss Kerr like oil on a smouldering fire. It turned her cool insolence to personal resentment. Five minutes after Mordaunt Dennison had gone away she was wondering at herself, and trying vainly to account for the sudden rush of passion that flamed her cheeks as she said hotly and hastily:

"Yes, certainly. You think me incompetent!"

"I have had no opportunity of judging," was the reply.

"You think me——" she hesitated; she could not say to him that she knew he had spoken of her as too pretty. "You think me too young and too injudicious for the position!" she said wrathfully.

"You will pardon my saying that you are scarcely giving me cause to alter my opinion."

The justice of the words, and the quiet force with which they were said, checked Miss Kerr for an instant. She looked at Mordaunt Dennison's imperturbable, quiet face, and felt a trifle ashamed of herself. But it was only for an instant.

"Your opinion!" she said freezingly. "Fortunately your opinion is of absolutely no moment to me."

Mordaunt Dennison rose. Miss Kerr rose, too, and the two stood facing each other.

At this auspicious moment Nurse Rose came in with the tea. She drew the little table towards them, and set the tea equipage on it.

Neither Mr. Dennison nor Miss Kerr spoke. Suddenly the latter said in a forcedly polite tone, obviously for the benefit of Nurse Rose:

"You will let me give you some tea!"

"No, I thank you," was the answer. And with a dignified bow, Mordaunt Dennison left the room.

Miss Kerr dismissed Nurse Rose with a curtness that surprised that good little soul, walked to the window, and stood staring into the canaries' cage.

Meanwhile, Mordaunt Dennison walked down the rough gravelly road towards Salford. His plain face was drawn into lines of thought, and his clear eyes, even though they were fixed on it, did not seem to perceive the stones on the road.

Some eighty years before, Mordaunt Dennison's grandfather, a man of Quaker descent and beliefs, who therefore wholly failed to see any barrier between gentility

and retail trade, had established in Selford its only bookseller's shop; and had carried his principles into practice by proving it possible in his own person to be at once a man of culture and refinement, and to conduct his business from behind his own counter. At his death, the business and its traditions had gone to his son, who dying somewhat early, had left to his own only son, Mordaunt, then a young man of twenty, the task of carrying it on and providing for his two sisters. This had happened thirty years before; and during those thirty years Mordaunt Dennison had fulfilled his trust with a faithfulness and success that had won for him the cordial esteem of all his friends and fellow townsmen. He was one of the most respected and honoured men in the town. In his hands rested more than one important office; to his judgement many a disputed point was submitted, and to his energy and his unfailing generosity the town gratefully acknowledged its constant indebtedness.

The fact of his trade had never, in all those years, proved the slightest obstacle to him socially. For any society outside Selford he had neither time nor desire; and Selford, from the highest to the humblest, made him welcome. No one ever dreamed of thinking of his shop as anything derogatory to him; in fact, they never thought of it at all. It was, so to speak, a part of him; and he was too truly a gentleman to have his gentility even spoken of, or commented on. He was Mordaunt Dennison, and to Selford that implied so much that there was no need to imply anything more.

Thus it came to pass that the slight Miss Kerr had tried to put on him, were the very first experience of the kind he had ever had. Naturally, being what he was, he could not possibly have felt in the least wounded by them. And though he certainly was thinking over her words as he paced so thoughtfully homewards, they did not carry the slightest sting of resentment with them. On the contrary, they interested him deeply, most especially as coming from Miss Kerr, who, as he told himself repeatedly, was "thoroughly original." "Perfectly sincere," he added, later on in his walk, with a slight smile.

CHAPTER III.

"HARRY, I really oughtn't to go! I'm not supposed to be out so late as this, you know."

"I don't care what you are or are not supposed to be! What on earth is the good of being the boss of a place, Ethel, if you can't do what you like?"

"Oh, but think of the committee, Harry! Suppose we met them?"

"Suppose we met Mentor, for instance?" he retorted mockingly.

A little angry flush of colour darted into Miss Kerr's face. She tapped her foot angrily against the leg of the footstool in front of her chair.

"Don't talk nonsense, Harry," she said shortly. "Mr. Dennison may make himself as horrid as he likes, but I don't care a fig more for him than for any one else; rather less, in fact!"

It was a lovely evening in the middle of May. Two months had gone by since Miss Kerr's appointment as matron of the Selford Convalescent Home. During those two months the satisfaction with which the committee—one member thereof always excepted—had received her, had blossomed into enthusiasm. She was "so remarkably pleasing," the Vicar said to every one he came across, in season and out of season. "Such a affable young person," Mr. Mott declared. These two sentiments were echoed in varying forms by the bank manager, Mr. Henderson, and Mr. Norton; while Dr. Vinter rarely came away from the Home after his daily visit without saying to himself in a tone of self-congratulation that "really that young woman's head was screwed on the right way." So highly indeed did Dr. Vinter think of Miss Kerr that he had been only too willing to embrace a suggestion made to him by her. About five weeks before this particular May evening Dr. Vinter's assistant had suddenly proved a failure and had been summarily dismissed, leaving the doctor somewhat at a loss and in the midst of a heavy press of work. When Miss Kerr stepped into the breach by suggesting that a young cousin of hers might possibly prove eligible for the vacant post, he thankfully acted upon the idea. She did not know much of Harry West, she said frankly; they had not met for years. But Dr. Vinter made light of that. The young man was Miss Kerr's cousin, and he considered himself fortunate to get him.

The female population of Selford cordially echoed this opinion when Harry West put in his appearance at Selford. He was a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with more than his share of the rather orthodox good looks comprised in fair hair, good eyes,

and a fair moustache. In addition to this his social instincts were of the most highly developed order, and he was unanimously agreed to be "quite an acquisition."

The approval with which the young man was regarded grew and strengthened as the weeks slipped by; but the appreciation with which the whole of Selford, prompted by the committee, regarded Miss Kerr, decidedly fell off, as far as the female Selford was concerned, as it became evident that Harry West apparently meant to lose no opportunity of making up or lost time in improving the acquaintance of his pretty cousin. He spent all his spare moments in the matron's room, and all his spare energy in inveigling Miss Kerr either to come and brighten by her presence his own distinctly contrasting habitation, or to take walks with him. Before very long there were numerous pairs of eyes in Selford that looked with disapproval upon the matron of the Convalescent Home.

Among these the one pair of eyes that had looked upon her with disfavour from the first remained apparently the keenest and most direct. During the two months of Miss Kerr's residence in Selford, Mordaunt Dennison had seemed bent upon justifying his first impression of her as derived from photographic and written statements. He had watched her from week to week with tacit criticism, and at the fortnightly committee meetings the criticism had been no longer tacit. When the enthusiasm of his brother committeemen had reached its flood, its meanderings inevitably found themselves stayed by a quiet adverse comment of which neither the justice nor the reticence was to be impugned. When the visit of inspection which always ended the committee meetings was covering Miss Kerr with a mantle of glory, it was always Mordaunt Dennison who gently but firmly detected and pointed out the rift inevitable to all such mantles.

The expression of Miss Kerr's face now, as she retorted upon her cousin's allusion to her "mentor," implied that she had returned this criticism with interest to the considerable developement of her sentiments towards the "tradesman" who had taken the liberty of objecting to her. An understanding of the position which Mordaunt Dennison held in Selford had necessarily come to Miss Kerr, but the contemptuous curl of her pretty lip as she finished her statement asserted with almost unnecessary vigour that she for her part entirely declined to concede it to him.

Her cousin laughed.

"Ah, but you really should," he said, "after the pains he takes to improve you!"

"How long will it take us, Harry?"

Miss Kerr had risen impetuously, her eyes flashing with almost unnecessary vindictiveness.

"Oh, about half an hour, I should say," he returned carelessly. "And it's only just half-past nine."

"Wait while I go and get my things!" she answered impulsively.

Harry West sat down in the easiest chair near to him as she left the room, but in an incredibly brief time the door reopened to admit Miss Kerr, looking prettier than ever with the brightness of her flushed cheeks enhanced by her outdoor bonnet and cloak.

"I'm ready, Harry!" she said rather defiantly. And the two set out together.

Their destination was a little plantation just outside Selford, known by the somewhat enigmatical name, given it in a more sentimental age, of "The Walk of Delight." It was celebrated for its nightingales. Harry West had developed a sudden desire to hear those birds, but though they were singing almost clamorously when the two reached the plantation, they did not appear to make any great impression on him. Nor did Miss Kerr pay much attention, as it seemed, to what she had been brought to hear. There was an odd little air of excitement about her, a curiously tentative flash of defiance in her blue eyes; and the hand she had laid, at Harry West's urgent request, just inside his arm, was just a little tremulous and shrinking.

The conversation in the Walk of Delight was carried on mainly in a fluent monologue by Harry West. Perhaps the least abstracted contribution to it on Miss Kerr's part was the little sigh of relief that escaped her when the gate of the plantation finally closed behind them.

"We had better walk fast, Harry," she said; "it must be getting very late!"

Harry West looked down at her with a smile which threatened to develope itself into a laugh.

"I know it's Dennison that's on your mind," he exclaimed. "I should cheer up if I were you! He's safe in the bosom of his family at this hour."

Miss Kerr snatched her hand from his arm, and gave her head a little contemptuous toss. Her shrinking demeanour vanished, and her pose was almost aggressively alert and confident.

"Let's go round by the town, Harry!" she said. "It isn't more than five minutes longer, and it really is a lovely night."

Harry West nodded a ready, delighted assent.

"Bravo, Ethel!" he said. "I always knew you had grit! By-the-bye, I hear that Mentor got you into a kettleful of hot water at the inspection affair yesterday!"

There was a moment's pause, and then Miss Kerr, her head very erect, said shortly:

"Yes."

"Old curmudgeon!" ejaculated Harry West sympathetically. "Vinter was wild with him. All about nothing, of course!"

"No," said Miss Kerr, with conspicuous brevity. "I had neglected something."

A whistle of amazement broke from Harry West, but it was suddenly cut short. Miss Kerr suddenly laid her hand on his arm with an insistent grip, very different to her previous tremulous touch.

"Harry!" she said. There was an odd breathlessness about her voice; her eyes were wide, and some of the colour had left her cheeks. "Harry," she said, "there's some one coming!"

At the same moment footsteps became audible coming along the road behind them, towards Salford. Harry West bit his lips sharply and glanced behind him.

"So there is!" he said, with a composure that his expression rather belied. "All right, Ethel, we shall keep ahead of him. By Jove, what a pace the fellow walks!"

"They'll overtake us!" said Miss Kerr nervously. "They'll see my dress, anyhow. Stand back here in the shadow, Harry."

The footsteps, firm and very rapid, were drawing nearer. Before Harry West could remonstrate, she had drawn him back into a shadow, just as a man's figure came round a bend in the road a few yards behind them. He came on in the full light of the moon, and as she saw him Miss Kerr's face turned from pale to white, and she shrank, as if involuntarily, further into the shadow.

Whether it was the slight sound she made, or whether a half-smothered ejaculation came from Harry West, could not have been said, but as he passed them the man half stopped, turned his head in their direction, and saw the two figures standing there together. The next moment he had just lifted his hat, and was striding on into Salford. It was Mordaunt Dennison.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was about two o'clock on the following afternoon, and Miss Kerr was writing letters; that is to say, she was sitting at the writing-table in the window, and to judge from the pile of addressed envelopes beside her, the correspondence demanding her attention was heavy. But none of those envelopes had as yet any letter inside it, and on the sheet lying on the blotting-pad before her was inscribed the date and nothing more. She was sitting with the pen poised in her hand, staring blankly out of the window.

On her pretty face was an expression that had never shadowed it before. The nurses that morning had found Miss Kerr for the first time fretfully impatient and irritatedly unreasonable. Miss Kerr's eyes were very bright and very cold; upon her forehead two lines as of thought or intense irritation had graved themselves deeply; her pretty mouth was set in a hard, determined line. The whole told of something between anger and distress. On the end of her penholder were several rows of little dents, and while she stared out of the window she bit it with a fierce gesture of self-contempt.

A footstep on the gravel outside made her look up. She dropped the pen with a sudden movement, and started to her feet, turning towards the door with a look which was expressive of an almost wild desire to escape, and which settled gradually into a half-concealed defiance and a struggling fear. She was still standing staring at the door when a knock came upon it, and she started violently.

"Come in," she said, in a voice curiously like her face. The door opened to admit Mordaunt Dennison.

Mordaunt Dennison was a trifle pale, and his keen, direct eyes looked even keener than usual. He held himself very upright, and seemed to bring in with him an atmosphere of his own; an atmosphere of decision.

Before he could even turn to shut the door behind him, Miss Kerr spoke.

"Won't you sit down?" she said rapidly and brusquely.

Mordaunt Dennison gave no sign of having heard her. He shut the door silently, and as silently took two or three steps towards her.

"Miss Kerr," he said, "I must apologise for disturbing you so early in the day, but I want to speak to you on a rather important matter."

Miss Kerr's eyes flashed, and the defiance gained ground. She remained standing, one hand resting on the back of her chair.

"Certainly!" she said. She did not again ask him to sit down, and Mordaunt Dennison paused a moment as he stood facing her, before he said tersely:

"I believe I am not mistaken when I say that I passed you and Mr. West just outside the town at ten o'clock last night."

"You are not mistaken," Miss Kerr responded, speaking so rapidly as almost to cut his words short. If she had turned a little pale, her eyes met his with a gaze full as direct as, and considerably harder than his own.

"May I ask you to explain the circumstances—as I do not doubt you can—which led to so unfortunate an occurrence?"

Miss Kerr gave an odd little laugh.

"I shall have pleasure in doing so," she said. "Mr. West was here calling upon me. He suggested that I should accompany him to the Walk of Delight to hear the nightingales. I consented, and since it was necessary that we should return to our homes, it fell out that you met us on the road leading in that direction."

Mordaunt Dennison looked steadily into the hard blue eyes.

"Miss Kerr," he said, with a kind of grave gentleness, "we have not been very good friends, I know. Possibly," he added, with the shadow of a smile, "you may desire me to state the fact in the present tense. An unfortunate prejudice has existed between us from the first. But since, unfortunately, it was I who met you last night, may I ask you to listen to what I have come to say, as though I were somebody else?"

As he spoke, all that modest consciousness of his own shortcomings which was such an essential characteristic of the man seemed to rise about him, and invest him with a double quantity of dignity which was almost pathetic.

There was a dead silence. Miss Kerr's eyes had shifted a little, and she was looking no longer at him but beyond him, staring fixedly at the opposite wall as her hand clasped and unclasped itself on the bar of the chair.

"May we not sit down?" he said, his eyes resting on that movement of her hand.

Without a word Miss Kerr sat down on the chair to which she had been holding. Mordaunt Dennison silently drew one towards himself and sat down also.

"Yes," she said rather faintly.

"I have thought it all over," he said, "as carefully as I could. I have come to the conclusion that there will be no need for me to take any steps in this matter, except one."

He broke off, and there was a little pause. Miss Kerr seemed to be occupied in tracing out the pattern of the carpet; she neither lifted her eyes nor spoke.

"That one step is," he went on, "to come, as I have now done, to you, and to impress upon you the desirability of your setting aside such motives as you doubtless have for silence on the subject, and proclaiming to the committee and to the world in general, the state of the case as to your relations with Mr. Harry West."

"My relations with Mr. Harry West?"

Miss Kerr had raised her face with a violence which made the movement almost a jerk, and she was gazing at Mordaunt Dennison with blank astonishment in her eyes, and her colour coming and going.

"You see," he went on steadily, "it would be of comparatively little consequence if it were only I who had seen you. But that, I fear, is hardly possible. People's words are apt to outrun their judgement, and might, unless the facts were known, manage to cause you a great deal of unpleasantness, and even involve you in some discredit."

"The facts!" Miss Kerr's exclamation was a sort of gasp.

"Yes," he said quietly. "The fact of your engagement. Of course you are engaged to Mr. West?"

Miss Kerr rose almost tumultuously from her chair.

"But I'm not," she cried. "I never dreamed—oh, I never dreamed of such a thing! I couldn't even think of such a thing! Harry West is my cousin, and as my cousin I like him and am fond of him, but I should no more think of marrying him than of marrying—of marrying——" comparison seemed to fail Miss Kerr.

"You are not engaged to him?" said Mordaunt Dennison slowly.

"Of course not!" repeated Miss Kerr. "Is it likely?" she added vehemently. And she turned and began to pace rapidly up and down the room.

"Then why——"

Miss Kerr stopped suddenly and confronted Mordaunt Dennison, who had risen from his chair, her hands clasping one another almost convulsively, her eyes wide, and every muscle of her face quivering.

"Why did I go out with him last night!" she cried passionately. "Why do you suppose? Because I was tired of being found fault with for trifles! Because your incessant carping and criticism is more than I will stand! Because your constant injustice and persistent prejudice cried out for some sort of justification. You've got your justification now! Take what steps you like upon it!" Miss Kerr threw herself down upon the sofa, buried her head in the cushion, and broke into a storm of unaccountable sobs and tears.

For a long moment the sound of her sobs was the only sound that broke the silence of the room. For a long minute Mordaunt Dennison stood motionless, his face growing paler and paler, and that curiously pathetic dignity strengthening second by second. Then he took two steps towards the sofa.

"Miss Kerr," he said, very gently and very humbly, "Miss Kerr!"

There was a special meeting of the committee of the Convalescent Home next day. It had been requested with much unaccountably sorrowful circumstance by Mr. Mott. He had contrived, indeed, to invest the occasion with so much unexplained solemnity, that the face of each member as the committee assembled one by one in Mr. Norton's office, was fraught with vague yet fearful foreboding. Mr. Mott sat in majestic silence until the entire meeting was assembled, Mordaunt Dennison being the last arrival. Then he rose.

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen," he began solemnly. "It is my onerous task to have a very unpleasant duty laid upon me. I must ask you, gentlemen of the committee, to prepare yourselves for bad, I may say the worst of news."

Here Mr. Mott paused, looked round the room, and gave three melancholy coughs of a preparatory nature.

"Gentlemen," he repeated. "A lamentable occurrence indeed has come to my ears, I may say to my eyes. I was driving home, gentlemen, on the night before last from my son-in-law's at Glenton. My wife had been spending the day there, and I fetched her home in my trap. We were just outside the town when my wife remarked to me: 'Peter, look there!' Following her wish I looked, and I saw the lamentable circumstance which I now lay before you—Miss Kerr at ten o'clock walking arm-in-arm in the Seford Road

alone with Mr. Harry West. Gentlemen, I can only ask you, what is to be done?"

With another cough Mr. Mott sat down.

In the midst of the dead silence that filled the room, Mordaunt Dennison slowly got up from his place.

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen!" he said. "The occurrence which so exercises Mr. Mott is capable of a simple explanation. This explanation I am happy to be able to give you. But before proceeding to do so, I think it right to inform you that Miss Kerr has promised to be my wife!"

PRINCE ASPHODEL.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN, on a certain chilly January evening, Regy Gunston—aged twenty-two—shut behind him the door of his mother's house in Pendragon Square, he believed himself to be not merely one of the most miserable, but one of the most ill-used men in town. Only three hours earlier he had proposed to Madge Ainalie and had been rejected, and, figuratively speaking, he still staggered under the blow.

"The mater was right in saying that she was merely amusing herself with me, and I was indeed a callow fool," he muttered as he turned out of the Square. "A presumptuous boy was what she called me—as if she had not led me on from the first! And I would have shed my heart's blood for her. A presumptuous boy!" In that phrase, although he did not know it, lay half the sting of his rejection.

His mother had not been in when he reached home, for which he was thankful; so he had written her a note of three lines, telling her what had befallen him, and had then fled the house.

He walked onward, heedless in which direction his errant footsteps might lead him; shunning as much as possible the main thoroughfares; and choosing instinctively those dull and quiet streets where, after nightfall, the tide of life seems nearly at a standstill.

How long he had been walking he could not have told, when, on turning the corner of a long, dismal street, he found himself in a huge flaring thoroughfare, which was wholly strange to him, and was evidently a converging point for the traffic from three or four different arteries. Regy's abstraction was broken up, and he stared around him with some curiosity. He had

not the remotest notion whereabouts he was, but he did not trouble himself to enquire. Every cab-driver in London knows Pendragon Square.

Not being minded just yet to set his face homeward, he turned into the seething stream of humanity, and began to slowly shoulder his way through it. Ten minutes later he found himself opposite the gaily-lighted entrance to what was evidently some place of public entertainment, and on casting his eyes upward he saw, framed in a transparency over the portico, the words "Thalia Theatre." It was a place he had often heard of, but had never visited, situated as it was in an unfashionable part of the town, and altogether outside the radius of his ordinary peregrinations. Regy's eyes, turning to a poster, there read:

"To-night, and every night, the enormously successful Pantomime entitled, 'The Princess with the Golden Locks, or King Hocqs-Pocus, and the Old Woman who lived in a Shoe.'"

Then he glanced at his watch, which pointed to a quarter past nine.

"Why not drop in for an hour? I may as well bore myself here as anywhere else."

There was plenty of room in the stalls, and in one of them he presently ensconced himself. He had seen more pantomimes when a boy than he could remember, but of late years he had felt himself to be superior to this class of entertainment. To-night, he looked for nothing but to be bored, and bored he seemed likely to be. To our hipped young man the whole business seemed terribly insipid and depressing, but his was perhaps the only solemn face in the house. At the end of half an hour he told himself that he had had enough of it.

Accordingly he rose to go, but next moment he sat down again, for just then, there bounded on from the wings a character he had not seen before, in the person of a tall and graceful girl, attired in mauve silk tights and alashed satin doublet to match, whose appearance at once arrested his attention. By the time she had been three minutes before the footlights, Regy no longer felt any desire to quit the theatre. Turning to his programme, he read:

"Prince Asphodel, Miss Maud Sinden."

"But that, of course, is only her stage name," added the young man to himself.

That Miss Sinden was a pretty girl was undeniable; and there was a certain grace and refinement about everything she did, which the almost entire lack of similar

qualities on the part of those by whom she was surrounded only served to bring into more marked contrast. But it was neither her good looks nor the refinement of her acting that attracted Regy after a fashion which was an utter surprise to himself. He had seen a number of young women in his time, chiefly on the burlesque stage, who had conspicuously excelled Miss Sinden both in looks and ability, but never one who had cast over him a spell at once so sudden and unaccountable. As he watched her and listened to her, he asked himself again and again in what this subtle and elusive charm consisted, but at the end of the evening he could only reply that he was no wiser than at the beginning.

Next night saw him again in the stalls of the Thalia, and the next, and the next after that, by which time Madge Ainalle's image had receded very considerably into the background of his thoughts, and he had made the surprising discovery that the wound inflicted by her was not nearly so deep as he had believed it to be. His mother, between whom and Miss Ainalle there had been no love lost, had merely said, when he met her at breakfast on the morning after his rejection: "I am very sorry for you, dear, in one sense, but unfeignedly thankful in another. You have escaped a great misfortune."

It was at the breakfast-table three days later that an exclamation of pleased surprise on his mother's part, who was engaged in the perusal of a letter she had just opened, caused Regy to look up and say:

"What's your good news, mamma?"

Mrs. Gunston finished her letter before answering. Then she said:

"Your Aunt Goring has written to tell me that a long-expected event has come to pass. Your cousin, Barbara Howarth, has arrived from Australia. After staying a few weeks at Moorhurst, your aunt and she will come to town together. Dear child! I shall indeed be pleased to see her. Both you and I, Regy, must do our best to give her a good time while she is with us."

Regy made a little grimace to himself.

"It's to be hoped that she'll prove to be presentable," he said drily. "Girls brought up in the bush are, I believe, sometimes——"

"Regy, how dare you! As if my sister's daughter could be anything but presentable!"

Percy Howarth, the father of the young lady in question, and Regy's father had been fast friends as young men, and the fact of

their having married two sisters had only served to knit their friendship still more closely. But after Howarth, in the hope of bettering his fortunes, chose to make his home at the Antipodes, Colonel Gunston and he, although they kept up a regular correspondence, never met again. This correspondence it was which gave birth to the idea between the long-parted friends that it would be a desirable and pleasant thing if, when the son of one and the daughter of the other should be old enough, they should see their way to fall in love with each other and ultimately marry. It was a notion which took a strong hold of the Colonel's imagination, and when, a couple of years later, he lay on his deathbed, he spoke of it to his wife as being one of the few things the fulfilment of which he would have liked to live to see.

Regy, while loving and respecting his father's memory, and desirous of carrying out his wishes in all reasonable things, inwardly resented having his future thus summarily disposed of, and being fully persuaded that his mother would do her best to further her dead husband's wishes, he looked forward to the arrival of this cousin from the bush with no very pleasurable anticipations.

When Mrs. Gunston had completed her usual morning round of duties, she sat down to reply to Lady Goring's letter. With what she wrote we are in no way concerned, except as regards one passage, which ran as follows :

"You ask me, my dear Henrietta, whether I know of any one who is in want of a really competent governess. As it happens, that is exactly what I myself am in need of. For some months past I have had cause to be greatly dissatisfied with Miss Meadows. Carrie and Gracie do not get on to my liking. They are naturally quick children, yet they seem to be scarcely a bit farther advanced than they were a year ago. In short, before your letter came to hand I had made up my mind to get rid of Miss M., and I shall at once give her a quarter's salary in lieu of notice. You may, therefore, engage for me in her place the Miss Tew of whom you write in such glowing terms. I am quite willing to take her on your recommendation, and to accept her as the paragon you describe her as being, till she herself shall give me reason to think differently."

A week later Miss Tew, with one modest trunk of belongings, arrived in a four-wheeler at Pendragon Square.

CHAPTER II.

NIGHT after night found Regy Gunston in the stalls of the Thalia Theatre, drawn there by an attractive force into the origin of which he did not trouble himself too curiously to enquire. It was enough for him that it existed, and that he derived a certain sense of quiet enjoyment from yielding himself up to it. So long as Prince Asphodel was in evidence, he had eyes and ears for all that went on on the stage ; but when she no longer occupied the scene he leant back in his seat, and stared at vacancy. More than once or twice he found it needful to asseverate to himself that he was most certainly not in love with Miss Maud Sinden, yet he never paused to ask himself where his unwise infatuation for one so far below him in the social scale, if persisted in, might ultimately land him. He knew that with the end of the run of the pantomime, Prince Asphodel must of necessity vanish from his sight for ever, but, meanwhile, he was determined to see as much of him—or her—as possible.

It was on the sixth occasion of his visiting the theatre that, at the conclusion of the performance, he found himself one of a small crowd congregated round the stage-door, awaiting the exit of that other crowd whose labours for the night were over. Presently they began to appear, some singly, others in little groups of threes and fours. Regy, keeping well in the background, scanned each likely figure closely. At length he was rewarded. Although the flaxen wig she had worn on the stage was gone, and although a veil hid three-fourths of her face, he felt morally sure that it was Miss Sinden whom his eyes had picked out as by instinct from the rest. On reaching the corner of the short street in which the stage-door was, as it were, hidden away, she shook hands and bade good night to two other young women, and then plunged into the busy throng of vehicles in the main thoroughfare. Regy unhesitatingly plunged after her, and when he had reached the opposite side in safety, thought for the first few seconds that he had lost her. Then he caught sight of her through a momentary winnowing of the crowd, and after that he found no difficulty in keeping her well in view. Presently she turned into one of the side-streets, which at that hour were comparatively deserted, so that she was now enabled to increase her pace, Regy, mean-

while, following some fifteen or twenty yards in her rear.

A walk of half an hour brought Miss Sinden home. When Regy had seen her safely indoors he went away satisfied.

One evening, about a week later, as Miss Sinden was on her way home, followed at a discreet distance by Regy, who never failed now to act the part of her unseen escort, three young fellows the worse for drink, coming from the opposite direction, and walking abreast, on finding themselves face to face with the girl, at once joined hands and, with loud whoops and yells, began to dance madly round her. The next thing the rascals were aware of was the sudden appearance on the scene of a tall stranger, who, after planting a blow in the face of one, which left him with a pair of black eyes for a week to come, seized the others with a grip like a vice, and, after bringing their heads into violent contact two or three times, sent the pair of them sprawling into the middle of the road. Then, raising his hat, he said quietly to the trembling girl:

"Miss Sinden, will you oblige me by taking my arm, and allowing me the pleasure of seeing you home?"

She obeyed without a word, being at the moment almost too bewildered to know what she was about. The three "larrikins," having picked themselves up, apparently came to the conclusion that discretion was the better part of valour, and betook themselves off, but not till they had launched a few parting gibes at the receding couple.

The girl was the first to speak.

"I am really very much obliged to you," she said. "I think their intention was more to frighten than harm me, and certainly they succeeded in the attempt." Then a moment later she added, with a little surprise in her tone: "But you know my name!"

"Is there anything wonderful in that, when it is there, on the programme of the Thalia, for all the world to see?"

At that instant they were passing a street-lamp, and the girl utilised it to take stock of her companion more particularly than she had hitherto done.

"Why do you start?" queried Regy.

"Did I start?" she asked with a little laugh. "If I did, it was because I was surprised to find in you the gentleman who for the past fortnight or more has witnessed from his seat in the stalls every performance of the Thalia pantomime."

"Is there anything remarkable about that?"

"Something very remarkable indeed. Whoever cares to see the same pantomime more than once, or at most twice? So, of course, your being there night after night got to be talked about in the theatre; till at length everybody began to ask who you were, and what could be the object that brought you there as regularly as the clock came round."

"I am infinitely obliged to 'everybody' for the interest taken by them in my affairs," said Regy drily. "That I had a certain purpose in acting as I did may at once be conceded, otherwise I should have been little better than an idiot. What that purpose was, Miss Sinden might perhaps not find it difficult to guess."

There was a brief pause; then came the answer, spoken hesitatingly:

"I was never good at guessing things, and if I were to try in this case I'm sure I should go quite wide of the mark."

Regy had expected some such answer, and was not disappointed. He had said as much as he intended at this, their first meeting. Perhaps when he saw her next he might venture to say more; but, indeed, as yet he had by no means made up his mind how far he intended to carry his venturesome and foolish experiment. It was enough that for the present he seemed to be drawn forward as by invisible cords, against which he had neither the will nor the power to struggle.

"I was not aware that I was propounding a conundrum," he said laughingly. "In any case, we will leave the answer till another time—if, as I sincerely hope and trust, Miss Sinden, I may have the happiness of meeting you again." The last part of the sentence was spoken with a fervency of utterance not to be misunderstood. "But before another word is said," he went on, "it is only right that you should know who I am—that is, provided you care to know. My name is Gunston—Regy Gunston—and I live with my mother at sixteen, Pendragon Square. But here we are at your home—already."

"What, Mr. Gunston, you know where I live!" cried the girl as she withdrew her hand, a little abruptly, as it seemed to him, from the shelter of his arm.

For the first time Regy felt at a disadvantage.

"The fact is, Miss Sinden," he began lamely, "that I—in point of fact——"

"That you tracked me from the theatre

to my home. Oh, Mr. Gunston! And how many times have you done that, pray?"

"The present will make the seventh occasion."

The girl was silent. She was evidently at a loss what line to adopt. On the one hand, if she were to assume to be offended, she felt that her anger would be the merest pretence. She was fully aware, even from the little he had already said, that she and she alone was the bright particular star which had drawn him night after night to the theatre, and in that knowledge there was a subtle flattery which bereft her of all power to chide him. Then again, in view of the service he had rendered her to-night, how could she blame him for following her? Finding herself thus nonplussed, she took refuge, with feminine guile, in a side issue.

"By the way, Mr. Gunston, Maud Sinden is only my stage name. My real name is Fanny Mardin—not nearly so aristocratic as the other, is it? My father is dead and my mother, and I, and my two younger sisters, rent the first floor where you see the light in the bow window. We are obliged to work hard in order to keep the home together, such as it is." She spoke with an added sparkle in her eyes and, as it seemed to Regy, with a slightly defiant air.

"Like your mother, Miss Mardin, mine also is a widow," said Regy with a sort of grave tenderness as he raised his hat for a moment. Both tone and action struck a chord in the girl's emotional nature. From that moment she began to regard him with changed eyes. "Do you know, Miss Mardin," Regy went on presently in a lighter tone, "I like your real name much better than your stage one. I do, really. It sounds to me simpler and more natural. But I must not detain you longer. If the hour were not so late, I would ask you to do me the great favour of introducing me to your mother."

Fanny—to give her her proper name—gasped. His audacity took her breath away. But a moment later she asked herself whether she was sure that his request was the result of audacity. Might it not have been prompted by some deeper, some far different feeling? And as she put the question to herself, the warm blood seemed to course more swiftly through her veins. In most things she was a girl of quick resolves, and in less than a dozen

seconds her mind was made up. She would introduce him to her home and her mother, and challenge the result.

"Do you really mean what you say, Mr. Gunston?" she presently asked. "Do you really wish to make my mother's acquaintance?"

"I give you my word, Miss Mardin, that I was never more in earnest in my life."

"Very well, then, if you will follow me I will introduce you to her."

She tripped up the steps, produced her latch-key, opened the door, and, going in first, motioned him to enter. The entrance hall, from which a wide, uncarpeted staircase led to the upper floors, was lighted by a paraffin lamp on a bracket.

"Be careful how you ascend the stairs," said Fanny. "They are old-fashioned, and have one or two awkward turns."

She went up first and Regy followed. On the first landing, from which three or four doors opened, a smaller lamp was burning. Without pausing, Fanny opened one of the doors, and holding it wide, said to some one inside:

"Mother, I have brought a gentleman to see you, who says he is very desirous of making your acquaintance."

"Gracious me! Fanny, you might have given me time to change my cap," exclaimed a pleasant, if slightly querulous voice.

"It's not your cap, ma, but yourself Mr. Gunston has come to see." Then to Regy, who had halted on the threshold: "Enter, Mr. Gunston, and allow me to introduce you to the ancestral halls of the Mardin family."

Regy went forward, and, hat in hand, made a low bow to a worn but refined-looking woman, who still retained many traces of former good looks, and who was half sitting, half reclining, on a long, cushioned wicker chair.

"Mother," resumed Fanny, "this is Mr. Reginald Gunston, a gentleman of such singular tastes that he has not once missed seeing the *Thalia* panto for the last fortnight. To-night, on my way home, I was beset by three young roughs, and I cannot tell what might have happened had not Mr. Gunston, who, by a remarkable coincidence, happened to be close at hand, come to my rescue. After that he was good enough to offer to see me home, and, lastly, he asked to be introduced to you."

She had taken her hat off, and the silky

coils of her dark brown hair, having escaped from their fastening, fell in a heavy mass round her neck and shoulders. Her cheeks were flushed, her large grey eyes sparkled with a sort of mischievous defiance. Her tall, lithe figure was set off to perfection by her close-fitting gown of dark homespun. Never, to Regy's thinking, as she stood there, divested of all the adventitious aids of the theatre—if aids they be—had she looked so charming as at that moment.

"I am extremely obliged to you, Mr. Gunston, for your kindness to my daughter," said Mrs. Mardin, while a faint colour suffused the pallor of her cheeks, "and I am very glad you have afforded me the opportunity of thanking you in person. It is not pleasant that Fanny should have to run the risks of the streets at so late an hour, but what must be must, and no one has ever attempted to molest her before. You will, I am sure, excuse my not rising, when I tell you that I suffer with my spine, and have been a partial invalid for years. But pray be seated. Fanny won't be gone more than a minute."

All this was said very simply and naturally. Mrs. Mardin was evidently superior to her present position. What Regy said in answer to her he could not afterwards have told.

As Fanny slipped out, a younger girl entered.

"This is my second daughter, Hetty, Mr. Gunston," Mrs. Mardin now said. "She has been to fetch the supper beer, and—but what have you done with the beer, child?"

"It's on the landing, ma," replied Hetty, flushing to the roots of her auburn hair.

"What made you leave it there? Bring it in at once, my dear."

Hetty, complying without a word, brought in a highly-soured can containing a quart of "six-ale."

"And this is the third and last of my daughters," resumed Mrs. Mardin. "Stand up, Linda, so that Mr. Gunston can see you."

Then from a footstool in the space between the invalid's chair and the fire there stood up a child whom Regy had not seen before, holding a kitten in her arms.

"She is eight years old, and, unhappily, blind; the result of an illness when little more than an infant," said the mother.

A lump rose in Regy's throat as the sweetly pathetic face confronted his for a

few seconds, and then sank out of sight again as silently as it had appeared.

"But surely," said the young man, "you are not without hope that her sight will one day be restored to her?"

"Several doctors have seen her, each of whom gives a different opinion, and it is just because of those different opinions that we allow ourselves to hope. Meanwhile, Mr. Gunston, I assure the child is by no means unhappy." Then turning to Hetty: "And now, my dear, will you lay the cloth for supper?"

"Oh, ma!" said Hetty, as if in protest.

If her mother heard her she took no notice, but turned to Regy, who was on the point of rising to take his leave.

"We always wait supper till Fanny comes home, so that we can all have it together," she said. "I think we enjoy it more than any other meal; at least, I'm sure that I do. We live very plainly; we can't afford to do otherwise, but if you will join us to-night, Mr. Gunston, I'm sure we shall all esteem it as a favour."

The offer so frankly made was as frankly accepted. Regy took off his ulster and handed it to Hetty. As he did so, Fanny reappeared, and as soon as the table was laid it was drawn up beside the invalid's chair. Then Regy took a seat opposite Mrs. Mardin, with one of the girls on each side of him, Fanny doing the honours of the table and attending to every one. Linda was given her supper where she sat by the fire.

Had Regy known Mrs. Mardin for a dozen years that lady could not have been more frank and outspoken about family matters than she was that night. She may have been actuated by the same motive that had incited Fanny to introduce him to her mother and her home—the determination that, should he choose to keep up their acquaintance, he should do it with his eyes open and with a full knowledge of their position and mode of life. Thus among other things, Regy learnt that when the pantomime season should be over, Fanny had no immediate prospect of another berth, but that a friend had interested himself on her behalf with the manager of the Duke's Theatre, and that there was every likelihood of her being engaged there for the next burlesque, whenever the present one should have run its course. He was also told how Hetty, who was just turned sixteen, was taking lessons of a well-known ballet master, who spoke of her as being one of his most promising pupils, and prophesied

great things of her in time to come. Then Mrs. Mardin spoke of the work she herself did, assisted at every spare moment by her daughters, which was that of making caps, chiefly the cheap sort worn by domestic servants.

It was not hard work, she went on to say, but the pay was so poor that had they not all laboured early and late, they would have found it a hard matter, plainly as they lived, to make ends meet. Even the nimble fingers of little blind Linda were utilised, she having taught herself to bend and shape the crowns of stiff muslin which compose the foundation of the caps in question. To Regy it was a lesson of how some poor folk live, which he never afterwards forgot.

When at length he could no longer delay his going, he shook hands with each in turn, but Linda he kissed. There was no word said on either side about his coming to Carton Street again, but both Mrs. Mardin and her daughters felt assured that they had not seen the last of him.

"You've made a fair mash, Fan, this time, and no mistake," said Hetty, who sometimes indulged in more slang than her mother approved of, as soon as he was gone; "and, oh my! ain't he a regular swell! Not one of your make-believes—anybody can see that—but one of the real upper crust."

Fanny did not answer, but Mrs. Mardin said:

"Mr. Gunston is a gentleman, and we are not concerned with anything beyond that."

To herself little Linda said:

"The first time Jack comes I shall tell him."

CHAPTER III.

MRS. GUNSTON, who ordinarily was one of those women who never allow either their likes or dislikes to influence them, "took to" the new governess, before the latter had been many days under her roof, as she had never taken to any of Miss Tew's predecessors. Mrs. Gunston was a busy woman, being connected with a number of philanthropic and charitable schemes, and her correspondence was necessarily somewhat voluminous. Heretofore she had found a pleasure in doing all her letter-writing herself, but now she installed Miss Tew in the position of her amanuensis, and not only did that, but took that young person with her to sundry of the meetings she made a point of attending, and even not infrequently for

a drive in the Park. Never had Carrie and Gracie had such holiday times before.

Agatha Tew was a slenderly-built girl of medium height, with a creamy skin, jet-black silky hair, and delicately curved eyebrows. Doubtless her eyes also were black, only no one ever saw her without a pair of close-fitting, smoke-tinted spectacles, which had the effect of making her look considerably older than her years. She was very alert, ready-witted and vivacious, and went about all her concerns in a bright, self-helpful way, which sometimes caused lymphatic people to stare. To conceive that she had ever "moped" for a single hour of her life seemed out of the question. She always dressed with a certain Quaker-like precision and neatness.

To Regy, Miss Tew was simply "the governess." When he encountered her at breakfast, or luncheon, he treated her with unfailing courtesy, but beyond that he hardly noticed her at all. That his mother should set such apparent store by her did not surprise him. It was only one specimen the more of Mrs. Gunston's "fada."

Of late, that is to say—during the past three weeks or so—Regy had not once dined at home, except on a Sunday, which was quite at variance with his practice before that time. His mother, who was under the impression that he had taken to dining at his club, forbore to question him on the point. She believed that Miss Ainalie's rejection of him had wounded him deeply, and she wisely considered that the more he indulged in such mild dissipations as his club admitted of, the less time would be left him for brooding over what could not be helped. But a question young Perrydew put to her one day, when she encountered him in the Row, filled her with vague alarms. "What have you been doing with Regy this long time?" queried the young man. "None of the boys at the Corinthian have set eyes on him for a month or more." What Mrs. Gunston answered she hardly knew, but she satisfied Mr. Perrydew somehow. What she had heard troubled her, but still she refrained from speaking to her son. Young men will be young men, and she did not wish him to think that she was desirous of prying too curiously into his affairs.

Two or three mornings later, while making one of her weekly tours about the house in order to satisfy herself that nothing was being neglected by the servants, she found herself in her son's bedroom. There her eyes were at once

attracted to a couple of cabinet photographs on the chimney-piece. She took them up and examined them. Evidently they were both likenesses of the same person, a young woman, although in one case she was represented as wearing the dress of everyday life, and in the other the tights, trunks, wig, etc., of the stage. The face was an attractive one, with nothing commonplace or vulgar about it, as Mrs. Gunston at once admitted. One likeness bore no name, save that of the photographer, but the other was inscribed, "Miss Maud Sinden as Prince Asphodel." Long and earnestly the mother gazed, first at one likeness, and then at the other; and, when she put them down, it was with a strange, sick feeling at her heart.

Looking round the room, she saw on the toilette-table a crumpled-up piece of paper, the presence of which offended her sense of order. She picked it up and mechanically smoothed it out, and then she saw that it was a theatrical programme. With fingers that trembled a little, she arranged her pince-nez and began to read, feeling nearly sure what she should find before she reached the end. Nor was she mistaken. Half-way down the list of characters she came to the same name that was inscribed on one of the photographs, and after that she read no further. As she crushed the programme in her hand, she told herself that she knew now why for the last month her son had never dined at home, and had never been seen in his club.

Mrs. Mardin and her daughters had rightly surmised that they had not seen the last of Mr. Reginald Gunston.

The next afternoon found him at Carton Street. He had ventured to bring Mrs. Mardin a few flowers—they were expensive orchids from Covent Garden—and a doll for Linda. Both presents were very graciously received. Mrs. Mardin felicitated herself on her foresight in having put on her best cap and draped her shoulders in an old but very choice black lace shawl, which never saw daylight except on occasions of high state and ceremony. Both she and Hetty were hard at work. Fanny had gone to the City to take home some completed work, and bring back a fresh supply of material. Regy stayed for an hour, chatting lightly and gaily, and partook of an early cup of tea with Mrs. Mardin before he left.

Earlier in the day Hetty, who was one of those girls who have all their wits about

them, borrowed a Post Office Directory from the public-house, and proceeded to hunt in its pages for Pendragon Square. The result of her search seemed highly satisfactory.

"Sure enough, Mrs. Gunston lives at number sixteen," she said to her mother. "And it must be a regular tip-top square, because Lady Tamworth lives at number seven, and Sir Somebody Something at another number, and a major-general at another. Oh! I do hope he'll make up to Fan and ask her to marry him. Only think, mother, what it would mean to all of us!"

She sighed, and turned up her eyes, and clasped her hands. She was an ambitious young monkey.

And now it came to be an understood thing that Mr. Gunston should accompany Fanny home—not by any means that he always went indoors with her, but commonly parted from her as soon as they came within sight of the house. Still, about one night in three he would accept Fanny's invitation, which she always gave in the shape of a message from her mother, and stay to supper. Few days passed without some token of remembrance from him reaching the little household in Carton Street, chiefly in the shape of flowers, but often accompanied by a parcel of hot-house grapes or other choice fruit, or by a box of bonbons for Linda. Both Mrs. Mardin and Hetty began to treat Fanny with a degree of deference they had never accorded her before. They felt that the fortunes of the family were in her hands.

Although Linda's love for the beautiful doll which had been given her amounted almost to ecstasy, she had a loyal little heart, and more than once she whispered to herself: "When Jack comes I'll tell him all about Mr. Gunston." But day after day went by, and "Jack" never came.

Jack Goff belonged to the Fire Brigade, and at this time he was located at the Great Digby Street Station, which is within half a mile of Carton Street. His family and the Mardins had been intimate for years, and as long as he could remember he had loved Fanny. That the girl was aware of his love cannot be doubted, but she neither encouraged nor repelled him; still, by degrees it came to be tacitly understood between the two families that some day the young folk concerned would make a match of it.

But Jack's poverty held him back. He was not in a position to offer Fanny a

home worthy of her acceptance, and till he could do so he would remain resolutely dumb. When, however, a few months before the opening of our narrative, by the death of a relative he came in for a legacy of four hundred pounds, he at once sought an interview with Fanny. But by this time she had taken to the stage, and was just then engaged for a minor part in a burlesque at one of the outlying theatres. The life fascinated her, and she was unwilling to give it up, even for the sake of Jack and his four hundred pounds. Deep down in her heart she felt that she loved Jack, and had no doubt that one day she should become his wife—but not just yet. So she temporised. She had no present intention of marrying, she told him, but if he cared for her as much as he said he did, he might ask her again that day twelvemonth, and then she would give him a final answer. What that answer would be she thought she could pretty well forecast already. But at that time Regy Gunston had not appeared on the scene.

It was the last night but two of the pantomime when, on turning the corner of a certain street on her way to the theatre, Fanny found herself confronted by Jack Goff. She had often wondered why she had seen so little of him of late—surely it was not possible that he had given her up!—and, while inwardly resenting his absence, she had derived therefrom a certain sense of relief. On no account would she have had Jack and Regy come face to face.

"How you startle one, coming suddenly on one like this!" she said with a nervous laugh, as he stopped in front of her and blocked her way. "I was afraid you must be ill, or something, it's so long since we've seen anything of you."

"That's what you choose to say," he answered sullenly. "But you always did like to do the polite, Fan. I don't suppose you've given one minute's thought to me since I saw you last."

"You're welcome to think so if you like," said Fanny, with a toss of her head. "But I can't stand here any longer. I'm late for the theatre as it is."

He stood aside and made way for her. She turned and held out her hand as if to bid him good-bye.

"Ah," he said, "I'm not going to leave you like this. I'll walk part way with you—if I may."

Fanny did not answer, but set off with quickened steps, Jack striding by her side.

"I don't see why a young woman who's escorted every night from the theatre, shouldn't be escorted to it as well," he presently remarked.

"What do you mean?" she asked, with a ring of sharpness in her voice.

"Just what I say." Then, after a brief silence, he went on in a voice which betrayed how hard he found it to keep the jealous passion which was surging in his heart from carrying him beyond himself: "Oh, I know all about your having been seen home every night for the last month or more by some West End Johnnie. I'd like to twist his neck—curse him! And I'll do it, too, afore I'm much older."

"Oh, no, you won't, Mr. Jack Goff," replied Fanny, in quiet, cutting tones. "If it comes to twisting necks, as you call it, you'll find Mr. Gunston a good deal more than a match for you. But I suppose you've been setting your little brother Mike to spy on me. I can quite believe it of you."

"And if I have, what then?" he broke out passionately. "For all you've cold-shouldered me as you have, you're still to me the dearest thing on earth. Oh, Fan, Fan, why do you allow this toff to follow you about as he does? Why does your mother allow it? Such as he can mean no good to such as you."

Fanny came to a sudden halt, and turning on him with flaming eyes, said, with a stamp of her foot:

"How dare you, Jack! How dare you say such things to me! Nothing that has passed between us has given you the right to do so. Mr. Gunston is a perfect gentleman and—and— Oh! go—go before I say something I might afterwards regret. Don't come another yard with me."

They were nearing the theatre by this time, and, being really late, as she had said, Fanny had begun to take off her gloves so as to save time when she should reach her dressing-room. As she did so a diamond hoop on one of her fingers flashed in the gaslight and dazzled Jack's eyes.

"Yes, I'll go," he said bitterly. "I've seen and learnt enough. I suppose this"—indicating the ring—"is the sort of gift a 'perfect gentleman' makes—of course, with the most honourable intentions—to any young woman on the stage who happens to take his fancy."

Fanny caught her breath, while a vivid blush leapt into her cheeks.

"It was a birthday gift, and concerns nobody but myself," she said. "Some

people remember my birthday, while it suits others to forget it."

She was gone before Jack could frame a word in reply.

"And there now! I really did forget it," he muttered ruefully as he stared after her.

That night Fanny walked home alone. About nine o'clock a hurriedly-written note had reached her, brought by a commissionaire.

"Am summoned by telegram to the bedside of my uncle, who is dangerously ill," it ran. "Cannot tell how long I may have to be away, but will make a point of calling on you immediately after my return, when I hope to put a certain question to you which I now regret I did not put before I was called away."

Fanny turned pale as she read. But that night it was neither Regy Gunston's ring, nor his note, that she kissed in the privacy of her bedroom and then placed under her pillow, but a somewhat faded photograph of Jack Goff.

CHAPTER IV.

NEXT day, as Fanny was leaving the theatre, she felt her arm touched by some one as if to arrest her attention, and on turning, found herself confronted by a slender, quietly-dressed young woman who wore a pair of smoke-tinted spectacles.

"Pardon me," said the stranger, in a voice at once low and penetrating, "but am I right in assuming that I am addressing Miss Maud Sinden?"

"That is the name I'm known by on the stage," replied Fanny.

"Then, perhaps, you will allow me to walk part way with you. I have something of importance to say to you."

Fanny bowed assent and proceeded on her way, while Miss Tew, for she it was, kept side by side with her.

"You are, I believe, acquainted with a gentleman of the name of Reginald Gunston?" resumed the governess presently.

Fanny gave an involuntary start.

"I certainly have the pleasure of Mr. Gunston's acquaintance," she said coldly.

"For the last month or five weeks, if I am rightly informed, he has not missed a single representation of the *Thalia* pantomime. I, too, have witnessed the performance to-night, and I need no wizard to reveal to me the attraction that has drawn Mr. Gunston there so often."

Fanny stopped short.

"You are an entire stranger to me," she said. "I neither know who you are, nor by what right you address me in so singular a fashion."

"My present position is that of governess to Mrs. Gunston's daughters. I have come to you to-night because Mrs. Gunston has discovered why her son never now spends an evening at home, and because the knowledge has made her a most unhappy woman."

"Mrs. Gunston has discovered——"

"Her son's infatuation for Miss Sinden."

Fanny had resumed her homeward progress. What Miss Tew had just told her had sent a sudden chill to her heart. After a minute's silence, she said:

"Has Mrs. Gunston commissioned you to tell me this?"

"She has not. I have come entirely of my own accord."

"Why should anything she may have discovered, or have been told, make her unhappy? What does she take me for?"

"For nothing that is not virtuous and proper—of that I'm fully assured. Her fear is lest her son should persuade you to engage yourself to him."

"And why shouldn't he engage himself to me if it suits him to do so? He's of age, isn't he, and his own master? Why shouldn't he choose a wife wherever he likes—provided the one he wants cares enough for him to marry him?"

"There's one very good and sufficient reason why he shouldn't do anything of the kind. For Mr. Gunston to marry a young woman either in your station of life or mine, would mean nothing short of positive ruin. Mr. Gunston's income is a very limited one, and were it not for an allowance from his uncle, he would not be able to live half as expensively as he does. Neither is Mrs. Gunston at all well off, and, when she dies, two-thirds of her income will die with her. In short, Mr. Reginald is wholly dependent on his uncle, who is the representative of a very old family and one of the proudest men in existence. Were his nephew to marry beneath him, or contrary to the old man's wishes, not a shilling of the latter's money would go to him; and what, in that case, would become of him and his wife?"

It was a question Fanny did not feel called upon to answer, even had any answer been possible.

"And now, my dear Miss Sinden, let us suppose a case," resumed this merciless young woman. "Let us suppose that Mr.

Gunston, in defiance of all opposition, has chosen to marry some one whose position in life is as inferior to his own as yours or mine. What happens? His uncle dis-cards him, his mother refuses to recognise his wife, his friends look askance at him, or cut him dead—in point of fact, he becomes a social outcast. In such cases society shows no mercy, none whatever. He retires with his wife to a cheap lodging, and before long he begins to brood over all that he has sacrificed for her sake; and then follows the inevitable doubt whether he has not paid far too big a price for that pretty face which so took his fancy, but which is already beginning to fade, and of which he is already beginning to tire."

Again there was a space of silence, while the two kept on their way side by side.

"Why have you, whom I never saw before, chosen to come so far out of your way to tell me this?" demanded Fanny at length.

"Certainly not for Mr. Gunston's sake, but for his mother's—and for yours, if you will believe me. If I see one of my own sex drifting on to shoals and quicksands, shall I not warn her of a danger of which I believe her to be ignorant?"

"You talk to me," said Fanny, with a break in her voice, "as if Mr. Gunston and I were engaged. But we are not engaged, nor—nor do I think we ever shall be."

Mrs. Gunston, on the day following her discovery of the photographs, had slipped on a piece of orange-peel as she stepped out of her brougham, the consequence being a severe sprain of the ankle. As she lay on her couch she could think of little else than those terrible photographs, and of all the unknown dangers which Regy's possession of them might imply. Then, out of her perplexity and the fulness of her heart, she had unburdened herself to Agatha Tew.

A little later in the day, Miss Tew, having, as she said, a private matter of importance to attend to, had asked to be allowed to have the evening to herself. It was a request which wrung a somewhat reluctant consent from Mrs. Gunston. What the matter of importance was which the young governess set herself so resolutely to accomplish, we know already.

It was past midnight when a handsome set her down in Pendragon Square.

"My dear child, where—where have you been till this late hour?" cried Mrs. Gunston, the moment she set eyes on her. "You

don't know how anxious I have been about you."

Then Miss Tew sat down by the invalid's couch and unbosomed herself.

"And you tell me that, as yet, there is no positive engagement between the two?" said Mrs. Gunston, when she had heard all there was to tell.

"Miss Sinden assured me there is not, and she does not strike me as being a girl who would try to impose upon any one with a deliberate falsehood."

"Then the wretched boy may yet be saved! Oh! my dear, how can I thank you sufficiently for this night's work? You have lifted an immense weight off my heart. Yes—yes, now that we know so much, we shall find a way to save him!"

There were tears in her eyes and tears in her voice. Rarely had Mrs. Gunston been so moved.

Her hand was resting caressingly on the girl's. After a little space of silence, she said, smiling through the tears which still shone in her eyes:

"And now, my dear one, I have a surprise in store for you. Your aunt Goring arrived quite unexpectedly this evening without having sent me any premonitory word. When I say your aunt Goring, you will be aware that I know all. Oh! child, child, how could you play me such a trick? But I will not chide you—indeed, I forgive you from the bottom of my heart. Only, for goodness' sake, take off those horrid spectacles, and never let me see you with them on again!"

The girl stood up, and did as she was told, feeling as if she were one burning blush from head to foot. It was, indeed, a pity that two such glorious eyes should so long have been hidden. They flashed one look at Mrs. Gunston, half-humorous, half-pathetic, then she cast herself on her knees and hid her face in her aunt's bosom, for she was none other than Barbara Howarth, that cousin from the bush of whom Regy had spoken so slightly.

She had persuaded Lady Goring into allowing her to personate Miss Tew in Pendragon Square. She was genuinely wishful to see and judge this English cousin for herself, whom her father was desirous that she should wed, while he himself remained in ignorance of her identity. The real Miss Tew, who was under considerable obligations to Lady Goring, had raised no objection to lending Miss Howarth her name and testimonials for the time being, on the understanding

that the position should still be hers when that young lady should have brought her little comedy to an end. One thing Miss Howarth does not know to this day, which is, that Lady Goring wrote a private note to her sister a few posts after the girl's departure for London, revealing the real personality of the self-styled Agatha Tew.

Happily for Mrs. Gunston, she was not called upon to interfere in any way between her son and Miss Mardin. When Regy got back home, three days later, his uncle being much better, he found the following note awaiting him :

"DEAR MR. GUNSTON,—In the note you sent me when you were called suddenly from home you said that immediately on your return you should make a point of asking me a certain question. If the question to which you referred is of the nature I suppose it to be, you must not ask it. It would be useless to do so. I am now the promised wife of another.

"My husband that is to be belongs to the Fire Brigade. We have known each other since we were children. That he loves me very dearly I have long been aware, but when he proposed to me some months ago, I would give him no promise. At that time I was not willing to give up my stage life, so I told him that if he still cared for me, he could ask me the same question in a year's time. Then you appeared on the scene, and I willingly admit that I was flattered by the attentions of one so much my superior from every worldly point of view. Still, I think that all through Jack had my heart in safe keeping.

"Last night, on my way home, I found myself, one among hundreds of others, looking on at the burning of a house which had been let out in floors to different families. Several engines were at work, and it was said that everybody had been got safely out. Then all at once a woman rushed into the crowd, screaming out that one of her children was still missing. She had left it asleep in a room on the top floor. By this time either flames, or

smoke, or both, were pouring through every window ; but the escape was at once planted against the house, and one of the firemen began swiftly to climb it. It was my Jack ! I knew him the moment I set eyes on him. The crowd watched him as if they had only one heart among them. They saw him reach the window, they saw him enter the room, and in silence they waited till he reappeared with the child in his arms wrapped up in a blanket. Then a great shout went up, and everybody breathed again. When still about twenty feet from the ground he became enveloped in a great sheet of flame and smoke which was pouring from one of the lower windows. An instant later, overcome, senseless, he came crashing to the ground. The child was unhurt, but Jack had to be carried to the hospital, and I am told that many weeks must go by before he will be able to leave it.

"Dear Mr. Gunston, the moment I saw Jack disappear in the burning house, my heart seemed to go out to him in a way it had never done before. I felt that I loved him far more dearly than I had known, and that I could never marry any other than he. To-day I have seen him and told him so. He says that I have made him very, very happy.

"I have nothing more to add. I return herewith the diamond hoop you were kind enough to give me on my birthday. Under the circumstances, it is far too valuable a present for me to think of keeping.

"FANNY MARDIN."

More than a year has gone by since Fanny's letter was written. Regy and his cousin have not yet made a match of it ; indeed, he is far from sure that Miss Howarth would accept him if he proposed to her. But what may be hidden in the future no one can tell.

Mrs. Gunston made Fanny's trousseau her especial care ; and at her desire and expense Linda has been seen by an eminent specialist, who holds out every hope that, as she grows stronger, her eyesight will gradually come back to her.

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MRS. CREEDY'S COMPANION.

By the Author of "Dame Durden," "Miss Kate,"
"The Laird o' Cockpen," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was not a woman present who did not feel that peroxide was a mistake, and that grey hair—dressed as that grey hair was dressed—sent every dye and colouring into the limbo of vulgarity.

The face was young. The pose of the head, the carriage of the graceful figure, were marked with distinction. If any one in that assembly—drawn to the large concert-hall of Shalemouth by the Annual Orchestral Concert—had been informed that she was a Duchess, they would hardly have been surprised. Very few individuals among the "sets," even the one calling itself the best, had any acquaintance with Duchesses; but the ideal was firmly planted in each mind, and here it was in flesh and blood, minus diamonds. That lack, of course, might be a natural delicacy arising from a desire not to dazzle them all too much; but what need of jewels on a throat and neck so beautiful that they were a living exponent of the hackneyed proverb "Beauty unadorned"? Folds of plain black velvet fell round the stately figure; the creamy blush-rose skin looked exquisite against that sombre background. The full dark eyes fringed by up-curling lashes gazed gravely, but not curiously, on the many faces. Then two women took their seats, and became units in a large, brilliantly-attired audience.

"Who is she?"

The question buzzed about from clique to clique, and set to set. There were three sets

comprising Shalemouth society. The retired military considering itself number One; the clerical persuasion, busy, officious, and self-important; and the just "ordinary" folk, well dressed, comfortably off, and content with life as they found it.

The First Section knew nothing of the strangers. The second had not seen them at St. Gudule's, and therefore could not venture an opinion. The third knew they had just arrived at Shalemouth and taken that large house, Vanecourt, on the hill, beyond Dale Park—the house which had been in the family of the Vanstone-Vanes for the last century or so.

The Vanstone-Vanes had gone the way of all flesh, and done as such flesh usually does in its brief pilgrimage—feasted, rioted, wedded, died, leaving at last but one descendant, who by some freak of nature had been altogether different to family traditions: had loved art more than good living, had paid debts instead of increasing them, and finally had let the family mansion and gone on an exploring expedition to the North Pole or South Africa—no one knew which—"and really," said local society, "when a man of such family and position chooses voluntary exile, it matters very little where he locates himself. All one knows is that he has gone."

Society—even such form and phase of it as is found in Shalemouth, feels no absorbing interest in persons who, instead of dining it and entertaining it, desert it altogether for wild and uncivilised portions of the globe. Therefore the sets and cliques of the place had long ceased to trouble themselves about the last of the Vanstone-Vanes, and were surprised now to hear that the grim old mansion had been bought or

rented or something, and that the new possessors were already on the ground.

Shalemouth society was in great form to-night.

Once a year, in April, the Orchestral Society—who had choralised and instrumentalised more or less ambitiously during the winter months—gave a public representation of their efforts. The representation took place in the public Assembly Rooms, a noble building adjoining the principal hotel in the High Street. The Assembly Rooms were used for everything in the way of public entertainment. Theatrical companies visiting Shalemouth gave stock-pieces or variety shows, on a stage which was so extremely limited that the scenery had to be cut down or dispensed with altogether; negro minstrels from Exeter or Torquay paid annual visits, and retailed stale jokes and popular ditties; comic opera even tried to disport itself on these boards, and as they had neither space nor background for display, they had sent skirt-dancers into fits of despair. But one and all of these entertainments were insignificant in comparison with the Annual Orchestral Concert. Then did the stage become a platform whereon the local florist and decorator might display their artistic talents, knowing well that the "Weekly Gazette" would loudly laud their efforts and "lend them bold advertisement." Then did palms and evergreens flourish above the garish footlights, and screens and draperies form a much-needed covering to the white-washed but mildewed walls. Then also did rows of white-robed maidens—of ages varying from eighteen to fifty—seat themselves before their music-stands in modest annual importance—fair wings of that dark centre sacred to the male phalanx, who tromboned, and oboed, and bassooned, and drummed according to the excited conductor's directions.

It was a noble and beautiful sight. It spoke of local ambition soaring to heights which only the soul of the amateur dare touch—of laudable endeavours to master some great work, at last to be submitted for public approval. For there is one beautiful trait about local performers—it is approval only they challenge, not criticism. They leave that to their weaker brethren in cities.

Every year one great work at least was performed—either choral or instrumental. A few minor ones—trifles by Brahms, or Grieg, or Wagner—filled up interstices of the programme; and the musical menu

would further be furnished by such delicacies as local talent—soliciting itself magnanimously—delighted or condescended to contribute.

The curate of St. Gudule's possessed a powerful tenor voice—according to the Gazette, and according to such of his friends and admirers as happened to have small rooms. He was always ready to sing a solo; so was Miss Mary Piper, the well-known local soprano, whose voice was shrill and wiry, but capable of immense execution, and who was set down to give the Jewel Song from "Faust." Then there was to be a harp solo by a North German lady of severe appearance, who gave lessons and was much patronised by the Third Section, having lost a husband in the great Prussian War, whose only bequest was a title and a small pension; the first gave her importance and enabled shop-keepers to be condescending, the second lifted her just beyond absolute poverty and enabled her to suit her terms to her surroundings. Meanwhile, to-night, just as the performers had taken their places—just as the last local celebrity had found her numbered seat—just as the rustle of programmes betokened interest in the forthcoming production—these two strangers had swept up the hall, had passed that formidable first row which meant the élite of the First Section, and then taken two vacant chairs a little to the right of the room, and forming the outer edge of row three.

The first woman was elderly, with a bright, good-humoured face and sparkling eyes, and wore a dull-hued gown of smoke-coloured velvet, with a few good diamonds nestling amongst white lace. But the second—well, it was she who riveted all eyes as if by some resistless force—who made the dyed and crêped and tortured heads conscious of their own defects—whose plain, perfectly cut gown defied criticism by its simple elegance, and whose calm, lustrous eyes swept with grave challenge over the curious or wondering faces turned to it.

They had scarcely taken their seats when the conductor raised his bâton, and the Society burst forth into sound, inaugurating their sixth season—to quote local journalism—by a spirited and artistic rendering of that most difficult classical work, Haydn's Surprise Symphony.

"The performance certainly justifies the title," remarked the elder of the two strangers to her companion. "I think it would have been a surprise—to the composer."

In the little lull caused by the conclusion of the Finale and its applause, the remark was distinctly audible to her neighbours. A fire of indignant glances was shot at the presumptuous critic by various eyes, but she seemed quite indifferent to their rebukes, and kept up a running commentary on the various items of the programme and their varied rendering, which was more entertaining than flattering to the performers. The interpretation of the Jewel Song seemed to convulse her with merriment. Indeed, the artless grace and abandon with which Miss Mary Piper assured her audience that "Oh, no! this! is! not! I!" in shrill staccatoed interjections, was well calculated to awaken mirth in any one possessing a sense of humour. That Mrs. Patrick Creedy—the new-comer and prospective tenant of Vanecourt—did possess a more than average amount of this useful quality was apparent by her undisguised enjoyment of the evening, and the undeniable wit that sparkled in her ceaseless remarks. Her companion, graver and more decorous in demeanour, vainly endeavoured to check them. The climax came, however, when the local cleric thundered out that he "would like a soldier fall," with allusions to some proud race whom he desired to gratify by this proceeding, who, if they had heard his untuneful announcement of the intention, would have been tempted to desire its instant execution.

"My dear, I can no more," gasped Mrs. Creedy in half-suffocated accents. "Do let us get out."

She rose as she spoke, laughter on her lips and in her sparkling eyes, and her companion had no choice but to follow.

"Such bad taste," murmured the lady patroness—member of the First Section—who had hitherto always made the first move.

"Atrocious!" echoed her toadies and intimates. "Some vulgar parvenu, I suppose."

But the unconscious objects of these remarks passed serenely down the long crowded room, apparently quite unmoved by the "stony British stare" which met them on all sides.

"I suppose it wasn't local etiquette. I wonder if we've shocked them?" remarked the elder lady as their carriage took them back to the hotel.

"I'm sure we have," answered her friend. "They looked so horrified. I quite expected that grim matron with the ostrich plumes on her head to rise and forbid us to leave."

"I wonder who she is! Dear me, Helen, it will be terrible having to know them all. After living all these years in Ireland I feel that English county society will be more than I can bear. I'm sure to shock them or run counter to their pet notions before I've been here a month."

"You can afford to be independent and choose your own friends," remarked the beautiful woman gravely. "No one will cavil at anything you do, or say, once they know——"

"Oh, but I don't intend them to know," said Mrs. Creedy quickly. "That's just it. They shall take me as I am, or leave me alone. Do you think I'd be bothering my head going into explanations as to my family? Indeed, no! It's bad enough to have to do all that sort of thing in dear Paddy-land, where your very great-great-grandmother's third cousin thirteen times removed can be brought up as a reference; but here—no thank you. Mrs. Patrick Creedy of Vanecourt, that's all I am, and all I intend to be until——"

"Yes?" came the gentle query in that abrupt pause.

"Until I've done what I set my mind on doing when I heard that Vanecourt was in the market. By the way, will you come over the house with me to-morrow? The London people say it's quite finished, and the housekeeper writes that she has the necessary servants at last. We'll go over in the morning and stay to luncheon, and arrange what day we'll take possession."

"Why do you associate me so closely with yourself in all your projects?" asked the other somewhat brusquely. "You know I am a nobody—a paid servant, so to speak, a woman under a cloud, who, but for your charity——"

"Hush, hush! my dear, you must not speak so. In all things you are my equal, save only wealth. I told you when I first saw you that you interested me deeply, even before I heard your unhappy story. When I said I would be your friend I meant it. Heaven knows we women are hard enough on each other sometimes; few of us know what friendship really means. But I am yours, my dear, as I said before, and it will be your own fault if I ever alter in my opinion of you, or my feelings towards you."

"You are far—far too good," murmured the other voice, low and tremulous with suppressed feeling. "I can never repay you, I know. You have made the world a different place to me."

"Nonsense, it's just the same place it ever was, only I've tried to throw a little colour into the dark sides of it. Your temperament is essentially melancholy, you know, Helen, and mine is just the reverse. Hence our suitability. You are the blue paper to the seidlitz powder, you know—the thing that sets it fizzing once it's mixed. I'm afraid my similes are a bit mixed too, but no matter, you understand what I mean."

Laughing gaily, but not boisterously, she alighted from the carriage and ran up the broad steps of the hotel. Her companion lingered a moment behind to gaze at the rippling sea, broad and silver-streaked by moonlight; on the bold headland, tree-covered and green with gifts of budding springtide above the dark red earth of its steep incline; on the hills sloping tier upon tier far as eye could sweep.

It was a beautiful prospect, beautiful as any to be found scattered through this fair West Country. The scent of the wall-flowers bordering in rich profusion the whole length of the sea-wall came fresh and sweet on the soft night air, and the splash of the waves on the pebbly strand made pleasant music.

There was nothing sad or mournful in the scene, one would have thought, nothing surely to bring tears to the quiet watcher's eyes, yet they filled to overflowing in that long silent gaze, and the face lifted to the moonlit sky was full of pathos infinite and inexpressible, as at last she turned and entered the brilliantly-lit entrance-hall, where Mrs. Creedy was chatting away to the head-waiter with an utter absence of dignity which was at once amusing and unusual.

There was a great deal about Mrs. Creedy which at times surprised Helen Cassilia. Not that her eccentricity ever overstepped the boundary of propriety, but only embroidered the skirt, so to speak, of that essentially Grundyified garment. Still, as her companion sometimes remarked, it was not so much what she did as what she might do, that kept her on perpetual tenter-hooks. Mrs. Creedy had selected Helen Cassilia to fill the post of companion in one of her whims. They had met casually in a little foreign town, where the younger woman was gaining a livelihood as an artist. In a month's time she was engaged as the companion of the rich eccentric Irishwoman, and living a life of ease and luxury that made her previous hard and toilsome existence seem only a bad dream by contrast. They had been to all the principal Continental cities, and seen all that

was best worth seeing in each. They had been received into the best society, and taken their fill of artistic pleasure. Then suddenly Mrs. Creedy had whisked herself and her friend back to England without any explanation, interviewed lawyers and agents, and finally taken a lease of this old dilapidated mansion, which had been carefully renovated and put into habitable condition, and here, she announced, it was her intention to "settle down."

A lovelier spot she could not well have selected; and as they drove up the steep hillside the morning following the concert, Helen Cassilia grew rapturous over the unceasing panorama of beauty that revealed itself at every turn and curve of the winding road.

Through the lovely flush of the deep red earth the grass was springing to life, and in the budding hedgerows the tender tints of spring leafage mingled with the richer colouring of wild flowers and ferns and creepers. The elm-trees as yet bore only suggestions of coming verdure, which sun and shower of April were at hand to ripen; but chestnuts and limes and lilacs had already burst into bloom, and the air was sweet with their faint fragrance.

As the carriage reached the hill-top its occupants looked back, and an involuntary exclamation escaped them. Far below lay the wide blue sea—blue as a sapphire beneath the sun-glow—on either side the curving coast spread out protecting arms, and tiny bays nestled here and there within its wide embrace. Hill and valley sloped on every side, green with young grass or springing corn. The town itself bore all the enchantment of distance; the broad river that parted it from its sister hamlet of Shale gleamed and sparkled under the slender bridge that connected the two; and over all the golden flood of sunlight poured itself in warm and loving radiance, as if it loved the beauty it cherished so kindly.

"What a pity one's vocabulary of admiration is so limited!" exclaimed Mrs. Creedy at last. "We've said, 'How lovely!' and 'Oh, isn't it beautiful!' to the Pincio, and the hillside of Piesole, and the Grand Canal at Venice, and the Luxemburg Gardens, and Fontainebleau Forest, and dozens of other places, and we can find nothing more novel or expressive to say of—this."

She gave a comprehensive sweep with her hand. She had all the Hibernian love of gesture, and her beautiful hands were always more or less emphatic.

"We have this same view from the house," she went on, with a glance at the quiet face beside her. "Do you think we shall get tired of it?"

"I can answer for myself," said Helen Cassilis, with a long sigh of rapture; "it is like the entry to Paradise."

"Let us hope with neither Adam nor the serpent to disturb us," laughed Mrs. Creedy.

Then she gave the order to drive in, and the wide entrance gates of Vanecourt opened for its new tenants.

CHAPTER II.

VANECOURT was massive and stately, but also somewhat oppressive. It was "a place of memories," according to Helen Cassilis, moving in her beautiful, stately grace through the endless rooms, having left Mrs. Creedy and the housekeeper deep in discussion as to household matters.

The treasures of past generations were here stored up—paintings, marbles, china, statuary; an old-world grace surrounded the vast rooms, and lingered in deep, shadowy nooks and corners, which modern upholstery had not dared desecrate into "cosy."

The spirit and associations of the place had been carefully preserved by Mrs. Creedy's orders, and it was both beautiful and interesting. Its sombre tones and old-fashioned furniture were relieved only by rich-hued curtains, or tapestries, by the deep glow of an Oriental screen, the colouring of a jar or vase, or dead-gold of a picture-frame. Great palms and masses of flowers stood in nooks and corners of every room and corridor, lending their own lovely finish of colour and fragrance to the artistic perfection that signalised the place.

One long corridor running the full length of the house, and with windows at either end, had been used as a picture-gallery, and here were gathered all the family portraits of the Vanstone-Vanes. Helen Cassilis walked slowly down this corridor, looking at each portrait with more of curiosity than interest. A handsome race decidedly, with many kindred traits of feature descending through the generations represented and catalogued.

At the end of the row she paused abruptly, her glance fastened on one picture—the face of a man still young, though with something tired and mournful in the thoughtful eyes and lined brow. She gazed and gazed, as if incredulous, and then a

flush, pained and deep, rose swiftly to her very brows, touching even the white throat with its hot, painful glow.

"How did that come here?"

Her own voice, stifled and terrified, startled her in the utter silence that reigned around. She drew a few steps away and stood looking at the portrait in unwilling fascination, her memory back in some tragedy of the past, her eyes full of dread and uneasiness.

A step beyond, and the loud, cheery voice of Mrs. Creedy roused her.

"Helen! Helen! Where are you! Luncheon is just coming up. What are you looking at? Have you traced any resemblance to me in the thirteenth cousinship?"

She came up to the motionless figure and slipped her hand in the arm nearest her, and they both stood for a moment regarding the portrait.

"The last of the Vanstone-Vanes in the direct line," explained Mrs. Patrick theatrically, as she pointed one finger at the young man; "and the only decent one of the whole lot, I believe. Faith! if it hadn't been for him and what I knew of him, I'd never have troubled my head to get the old place out of the hands of Jews and money-lenders. Not that he'll be thanking me for it, for from all accounts he's as proud as Lucifer."

"What—what was his name?" asked Helen Cassilis, in a low, uncertain voice.

"His name? Why, Dudley, of course. Didn't I ever mention it to you before?"

"No," was the cold response, "I wish you had. Had he another name besides that?"

"Indeed, yes. The Vanstone-Vanes were mighty fond of names, and never content with just the one needful. Dudley Lambert Carew was the whole, I believe, and enough for any Christian to bear, I'm thinking. I'd have lopped off a few if I'd been he; maybe he did, for it's precious little I know about him. You see, my dear, I'm quite a branch line. One of the first Vanstones married an Irish girl, and the family didn't take to her very kindly, and then her daughter married an Irishman and settled over in Belfast, and 'tis from them I came, though my husband—rest his soul—made all his money in trade, and they were all too high and mighty to know us. However, it's queer the workings of Providence, for here am I, able to buy up the whole property, if I choose. Yes, and leave it to Dudley or his heirs, seeing that I've neither chick nor child of my own to care for."

The listener's face had grown quiet and cold once more during this harangue. She made some casual remark and then turned abruptly away, and they descended the broad oak staircase and entered the dining-room just as the luncheon-bell had rung for the second time.

Shalemouth society was much exercised in its mind. The news had burst upon it that the "person" who had behaved so strangely at the concert was the new owner of Vanecourt, the place of the place.

The First Section, who did not condescend to gossip—more than was absolutely necessary to keep itself conversant with passing events—was the last to hear of this. So it came to pass that when its leader, the lady of the ostrich plumes, by name Mrs. Lorrimer, at length signified cards might be left at Vanecourt, the visitors learnt to their horror that the Third Section had already been made welcome and were firmly established in the good graces of the newcomer.

Furthermore, Mrs. Lorrimer, who was short-sighted and somewhat obtuse, made the egregious mistake of taking Mrs. Cassilis for Mrs. Creedy. It had never occurred to her that the stately, beautiful woman who had created such a sensation by her appearance could be merely the paid companion of the fussy, loud-spoken, bustling lady who was pouring out tea in the great dusky drawing-room, and chatting volubly to the North German lady who was seated in a comfortable arm-chair discussing tea-cakes and tea with equal gusto.

The First Section, of course, knew Madame von Schwartz, she had harped at its "At Homes," and had been permitted to give concerts under its august patronage, but the First Section did not call upon her, and most assuredly would never have dreamt of offering her tea and cakes in its drawing-rooms. Mrs. Lorrimer was aghast at the sight, and perhaps it in some measure added to her confusion, for she greeted Mrs. Cassilis cordially and Mrs. Creedy stiffly, and sitting very bolt upright on one of the most straight-backed chairs in the room, she addressed her entire conversation to that lady, and never discovered her error until she was saying good-bye. The quiet rebuke to her gushing invitation to "call soon"—"Pardon me, I fear you have made a mistake. I am only Mrs. Patrick Creedy's companion," nearly crushed her; a few of the objectionable Third Section, hugely enjoying finest tea and

choice concomitants and pleasant society, smiled knowingly at her confusion. She had neither the tact nor presence of mind necessary to remedy her error. The look of blank horror, the flush of indignation, were eloquent of her feelings. Muttering something indistinctly, she crossed over to Mrs. Creedy and began a hurried apology.

The Irishwoman had enjoyed the joke too much to let it pass. She put on her strongest brogue, her most pronounced manner.

"Mistake is it! Faith then, me dear madam, I'm not wondering at it. Why, Mrs. Cassilis is twice the lady I am. I only engaged her to tache me manners!"

How Mrs. Lorrimer got out of that drawing-room she never knew. An earthquake could scarcely have confused her more. But she was a "power in the land," and her word went forth. This woman could not be known; no, in spite of her wealth, her position, her ability to entertain, she was not of the stuff that the First Section delighted to honour. They could not "dine" her, neither could they "At Home" her; it would be impossible. As for the companion, an upstart, a nobody, who looked and spoke like a queen and dressed like a duchess, well, what could be said of her? No doubt she was a mere adventuress and had a story, and was no better than she should be. They suspected toilet secrets with regard to that wonderful complexion; it might almost be enamelled, and really a person with grey hair ought to wear caps, not dress it in that fantastic fashion, for all the world like some picture by Reynolds or Romney. The First Section was always delightfully vague on matters appertaining to art.

Meanwhile, mirth and talk ran riot in that big, old-fashioned drawing-room of Vanecourt.

Madame von Schwartz was eloquent, and dearly did Mrs. Creedy delight in her curious English and quaint expressions; and nothing pleased her more than to "draw her out" with respect to the treatment she had received at the hand of Shalemouth society.

"Ah, madame, it is not to be believed what I have suffer when I first came here. I so honoured, of so great name in my own country! I go to London, I play; ze great artists hear me. They say, 'No harp now, it is not desired. It is all ting-ting.' Ah, madame, but it is not all 'ting-ting' when ze soul of ze player is in ze strings. Zen I have one letter to a lady whose

daughter she desire to learn, and we come here, and here I remain, and have to teach who I can. Ze little girl of ze grocer and ze young mees at ze counter of ze big draper. Ach, herr Gott! but it is hard, madame—it is very hard."

"I am sure it is, dear Madame von Schwartz," said Mrs. Patrick sympathetically. "But you shall give a concert here, if you like, in my rooms, and I'll make the people come. They shall take guinea tickets too, and I'll have some smart people down from London, and we'll set you going—see if we don't."

"Ah, madame, you are very good—you have ze generous heart," said the grateful artist. "It is well there are such as you in dis hard world. Zat Madame Lorrimer, now—ach, but she is different—how different, so high and mighty as she to me has been. Never ze shake hands, oh, no, and so of a condescension to take two—three little tickets for my concert—half-a-guinea for ze three, I ask no more—and of that she giv me ten shilling because I ask for a flower from her conservatoire to wear for my toilette. 'Madame,' I say, 'I see you have ze camellia "en branche" in your glass-house. It is ze one flower I wear in my hair in Germany. Will you do me ze favour to give me it?' And she give it me, my dear madame, oh, yes—but she took off ze sixpence as I tell you; and when I am in ze town ze day of my concert I see dozens of ze same camellia 'en branche' in a shop, and I ask ze price, and they is—fourpence each!"

She stopped, breathless from rapidity of speech and indignation. Mrs. Patrick was in ecstasy. This was the sort of company she delighted to entertain. None of your starched, stiff, self-important folk who worshipped so conscientiously at Mrs. Grundy's shrine, and wanted to know chapter and verse of your antecedents before they could offer you a cup of tea, or say "good morning."

She kept Madame von Schwartz to dinner, and made her play tender bits of Schumann and Chopin on the big Steinway grand afterwards, while the scents of the garden and conservatory came in through the open windows, and far off the great wide stretch of sea took lovely tints from sunset and twilight.

"What a beautiful home you have, madame," said the artist softly, in the interval of those dreamy fragments which her fingers interpreted independent of eyes or music.

She spoke to Mrs. Creedy, but her eyes were on the lovely, musing face of Helen Cassilis, who was leaning against the open window.

"Yes," she answered. "It is almost too perfect, when one remembers how harsh and cruel a world lies so close."

"It will not be harsh or cruel to you. You have ze beauty, you can make it bow before you. It is only a woman who is old, and ugly, and poor, and quite alone who knows how terrible zat world can be."

A shiver ran through the stately form. The eyes that for one brief moment turned to the queer, homely face at the piano were full of mortal pain. They startled Madame von Schwartz into playing a false note.

"Ah! what is it, then?" she half-whispered. "Trouble? Even you, so beautiful, so young; ze trouble of woman?"

"Yes," said the quiet voice; "the trouble of woman. Which of us can escape it?"

Softly and dreamily the lovely spring-time deepened into the yet more perfect loveliness of summer, and the grounds of Vanecourt were a maze of brilliant blossoms, flourishing here in almost tropical luxuriance, sheltered as they were by the tall growth of Wellingtonia, by pines and firs, and stately avenues of chestnut and groves of beech and oak.

The drowsy days drifted by in pleasant idleness, their mill-pond placidity only touched here and there by some ripple of life from the outer world, but neither stirred nor disturbed by it as yet.

Mrs. Creedy seemed strangely attached to her companion. In all her drives and walks they were together. The cool, light evenings saw them drifting up the beautiful river, Helen Cassilis rowing with the strong, regular stroke of long practice, and the elder woman lounging amidst the cushions in the stern, a broad straw hat shading her good-humoured face, a loose silk blouse belted round her portly figure.

"Comfort before appearance, my dear," she had said to Helen Cassilis. "I don't say a blouse is becoming to my charms, but I can afford the sacrifice for the sake of the convenience."

It seemed to Helen Cassilis that this idle, pleasant life was almost too good to last, a long calm which must eventually be succeeded by storm. Peace to her had always been the presage of trouble, a thing to be dreaded more than welcomed. Besides,

she was living, as it were, on the edge of a volcano.

At times she reproached herself for having withheld a secret from the kind-hearted woman who had been so true a friend; at others she felt that she could not have borne to speak of it to any living soul; that all who knew would despise her as she despised herself. She was not a coward, but her life had been so hard and terrible that it was little wonder she clung to this present foothold as a shipwrecked mariner clings to the rock the rugged sides of which seem at least to promise safety, if not rescue, from the raging sea beyond.

CHAPTER III.

THE severe and simple elegance of her companion's toilet sometimes provoked Mrs. Creedy to good-humoured, though somewhat disparaging comments.

"You are but twenty-eight, and you try to look forty," she said one night when she had accompanied Helen Cassilis to her room, and insisted on her turning out her stock of gowns for inspection. "Black—always black. Not but that it suits you; but people will say I make you use it as a uniform, like shop-girls. Black velvet, black cashmere, your linen blouses are the only approach to colour I've seen on you, and then you choose that horrid dark shade of heliotrope. What it is to have a skin! I could never attempt such a shade as that."

Helen Cassilis smiled. She was turning over the contents of a wardrobe drawer as Mrs. Patrick had ordered, in her good-humoured, masterful fashion, to find some suitable attire for a garden-party the next afternoon.

"No, you shall not wear that eternal blouse. I'm sick of them; and every girl will sport one, as there's going to be tennis. What idiots women are to play that game, and in such weather, too! If they could only see themselves tearing about, going into the most ungraceful attitudes, getting hot and damp and untidy! Ugh! if I had a daughter she should never touch a racket in public. Well enough, if the exercise is so beneficial, to have a game in your own grounds with only your own people to see what a sight half an hour of it can make of you. But to challenge public criticism, racing here and there with a lot of men in their shirt-sleeves, I call it disgusting!"

"What a tirade!" exclaimed Helen Cassilis, laughing. "A pity the revolting

daughters cannot hear you. You know the emancipated woman is going to do everything men do. It will be football next, and female jockeys."

"Fools!" sniffed Mrs. Creedy contemptuously. "As if any woman can better herself by stepping out of her own proper sphere."

"But her sphere is everywhere," smiled Helen, who always enjoyed a passage of arms with the impetuous Irishwoman. "What did I read you to-night—

They talk about a woman's sphere

As though it had a limit.

There's not a place in earth or heaven,

There's not a task to mankind given,

There's not a blessing or a woe,

There's not a whisper—yes or no,

There's not a life, or death, or birth

That has a feather-weight of worth,

Without a woman in it!"

"Exactly," snapped Mrs. Creedy with contempt. "She's everywhere, whether wanted or not; and her value, under the circumstances, is the poet's estimate—'A feather's-weight of worth.'"

"Well; there's always two ways of looking at things," said Helen Cassilis; "it never struck me to put that unflattering interpretation on the poet's summary of our ubiquity."

"What's that? What are you covering up so quickly?" asked Mrs. Patrick suddenly, as she sprang from her chair. "Lace—and what lovely lace; and—good gracious, Helen! what's this?"

The flashing interrogation of her startled eyes changed to wonder as she saw how white her companion's face had turned.

"I—really—excuse me, Mrs. Creedy," she stammered, "but you have no right to pounce upon my property in this unceremonious fashion."

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Creedy coldly. She handed back a large photograph as she spoke. "I was not aware you were acquainted with any member of this family. Yet people don't give away photographs to strangers, as a rule."

For a moment Helen Cassilis stood there dumb and shame-stricken, the photograph in her trembling hands; but her eyes were resting on the face so truthfully limned.

"I—I ought to have told you," she faltered, "but I had not courage; and when I came here I did not know—"

"Did not know that you were coming to the very house of the man whose picture you hold, did not recognise his portrait in the gallery yonder the first day you set foot here, Helen."

The reproach in the kindly voice was more than those overstrung nerves could bear. She threw the photograph into the open drawer and fell on her knees before her friend.

"Oh! it is so hard to speak of—now," she cried. "So shameful. Oh! believe me, I have been most unhappy with this—this secret between us. Often and often I longed to tell you, and I could not find courage; and now, I suppose, you will never believe——"

A heavy sob broke the words, and in the silence that followed she lifted her head, and her beautiful sorrow-filled eyes gazed pleadingly into the face which never before had worn for her so cold and stern a look.

"I will believe—just what you choose to tell me, Helen," said Mrs. Creedy, with a quiet dignity which no one would have recognised as possible to the rollicking, good-humoured Irishwoman she had represented. "I hope our friendship has proved me worthy of truth at least, if not of confidence. I claim no right to pry into your past life. I ask no more than you choose to tell."

"I will tell you all—everything. Then—you must act as you please."

Her tears were dried now. Something akin to desperation was in the great soft eyes, the white, rigid face.

"You know my story—the story of my marriage," she began, her voice firm now, but very low and self-restrained. "I told you how wretched it was, how, with no will or wish of my own, I had been given to a gambler—a drunkard—an assassin, that all my youth had shrivelled away in the furnace of horror into which I had been thrown. I told you that at last freedom came; but one thing I did not tell you. It was that when he—this man who called me wife—was in prison, I met another. Truer, nobler friend never woman had. We met as artists meet on foreign soil; you know the 'camaraderie,' the freedom, the unrestraint. He was travelling and sketching for some English journal. I only knew him as Dudley Lambert. For two short months we were constantly together. He thought me a widow, and I—I never had the courage to undeceive him. How could I tell one so noble and honourable the shameful history of the man whose name I bore? I never once thought our friendship meant more than just what it seemed to mean, what it was safe to mean; never—till one mad moment broke down the barrier, and I knew he loved me."

"You—you told him then?" came breathlessly from the listener's lips.

"No; I was too cowardly. I had never been happy before in all my life, in childhood, or youth, or womanhood, and this—oh, I cannot tell you what it was. He was different from any man I had ever met. Strong, gentle, noble, fighting with misfortune and contumely, so brave, so true. I think often it was that that made his great charm. One felt his truth. One knew he would not change or forget easily. Now there are times when I pray he might—when I hope he has forgotten."

She broke off with a little bitter laugh.

"I let him love me," she went on. "I let him believe that I loved him, until—my hour of liberty was over. Oh, I know what you will say; it was cruel, shameful, unwomanly. Then, oh, that time seems all like something tearing, uprooting my whole life, my very self. I came out of it as you see me now"—she touched the soft white hair with a little pathetic gesture, and then rose feebly, uncertainly to her feet.

The touch on her arm was very gentle.

"You have not told me all, Helen!"

"No," she said, a quick, hot flush dyeing her white face. "For when I have told you, it will be time to say good-bye. I never ought to have come here. I never ought to have stayed an hour once I knew."

"Hush, my dear, hush! Am I not a woman, too?"

"There is not much more to tell. When I knew that my tyrant was free once more I grew terrified. I knew what he was, jealous, passionate, as all Italians are. I threw myself on the mercy of the man I loved, and I asked him—oh, don't look at me! sometimes I wonder how I can bear any good woman's look—I asked him to take me away with him. He was going to Africa then. I should never be traced, never be found, and I thought he was like other men; but he was not. Oh! thank Heaven for that. I can say it now, though then I thought my heart would break for shame of his refusal, for—he refused. From that hour to this I have heard no word of him."

"And you are free now?"

"I am free. But you know at what a cost. My husband died a felon's death for political assassination. Think"—and she laughed harshly—"think what our dear Mrs. Lorrimer would say if she knew that for one half-hour of her immaculate life she

had conversed with the wife of a murderer, and mistaken her for the mistress of Vanecourt!"

"Oh, my poor child!" The motherly tone, the kind face touched the sorely-tried woman as she had never thought she could be touched again.

"You—you should not pity me," she said. "I am a wicked woman, nothing can alter that. Even he thinks so, though he was very merciful. He might have called my conduct by a harsher name than he did. Oh, don't look so sad! I deserve all I have suffered. My history is only the history of so many women."

The tears were streaming unheeded down Mrs. Creedy's kindly face.

"I wish you wouldn't speak like that," she implored, "it makes my heart ache. To think you have borne all this secretly, silently, day for day, and I have made you my bond-slave, sent you here and there, distracting, worrying, claiming you. Oh, I hate myself when I think of it!"

"You have been all that was kind and good and womanly. For heaven's sake don't speak as if I deserved consideration at your hands. If you turned me from your doors now, you know——"

"Helen, if you dare say such words, I'll—I'll be tempted to show you what an Irish-woman's temper is like! We are staunch in our loves and hates, if in nothing else; staunch to death. I'll say no more, but the day will never dawn when you'll leave Vanecourt with Honoria Creedy's freewill."

The eyes of the two women met. Then it seemed as if what pride and suffering had not done, this unexpected sympathy effected, for with a little faint protesting cry, the stately figure slipped from those encircling arms, and lay white and still as marble on the floor.

More and more Shaleworth society marvelled at Mrs. Creedy's infatuation for her companion. They agreed it was bad form altogether, and only excusable on the ground of Hibernian eccentricity; but as the months slipped by and the cuckoo's note again heralded the spring, and the freshly budding leafage leapt gladly from the brown boughs to welcome sun and shower of April, they began to whisper that some strange subtle change was evident in Helen Cassilis. Pale she had always been, but this curious transparent pallor was a sign of more than delicacy. The large deep eyes seemed larger and more sombre in that strange framework of soft grey. "And

yet she looked so young," they said curiously and wonderingly, as if scenting the secrets of a Rachel or a Ninon de l'Enclos beneath that spiritual and delicate loveliness.

Mrs. Creedy noted these signs with dawning terror. She saw that something was radically wrong. The secret springs of unhappiness in feminine nature have much to do with the workings of that curious and delicate machinery. Helen Cassilis was dying of unhappiness, and secret intolerable shame. That was the long and short of it. Doctors might talk as they chose of "want of tone," but a woman sick at heart, consumed by vain love and longing, and stung to ceaseless torture by her own self-scorn, is not a woman to whom life can be attractive, or even desirable.

"I must do something," thought Mrs. Creedy desperately, as day after day showed no improvement, only failing strength and failing spirits. "If I could only find out where he was! Good gracious"—as a thought suddenly struck her—"what a fool I've been all this time!" For she suddenly remembered that a certain illustrated journal, delivered weekly in company with all current magazines and journals, was an object of the deepest interest to Helen Cassilis. Doubtless it contained the sketches of South African life which Dudley had been engaged to give, and for which he was risking life, health, and happiness.

A wire to the office of that same journal soon brought confirmation of this fact, and the address of the absent artist. The next mail bore a long explanatory letter to the "thirteenth cousin," which had so overwhelming an effect upon that relative that the very next steamer from Cape Town had him on board, and the sketches were relegated to the somewhat amateurish execution of a friend at Pretoria.

A month is not a very lengthy period of time, but every twenty-four hours of every day of that month were full of agonising suspense to Honoria Creedy.

"Men are so queer, one never knows what they will do, or how they will take interference," she said to herself, wandering distractedly to and fro the beautiful grounds. "I put it as strongly as I could. I told him I knew the whole story, and that she was just dying by inches. If he ever wanted to see her again he must lose no time. Oh, surely he will come—his face looks kind, proud as it is; and then—well, I must leave the rest to nature—or love. All this is free

from debt," and she looked lovingly at the beautiful old house on which the moonlight rested, "and it will go back to him—even if he won't live here during my lifetime. Perhaps he will for Helen's sake."

The suspense ended at last. Love had conquered pride, and Dudley Vanstone-Vane was bringing in person the answer for which his Irish cousin had pleaded.

The risk was great, she felt, but happily it was run with safety. Happiness is not often fatal, and Helen Cassilis could bear even its wonderful and overpowering promises before another summer bloomed.

The shock was more beneficial to her than to the society of Shalemouth, whose delight at the return of the long absent owner of Vanecourt was considerably lessened when the local journal gave forth the interesting information that the said "owner" was shortly to be united in the bonds of wedlock to the beautiful widow they had only known as "Mrs. Creedy's companion."

THE STORY OF BEATRIX.

By LEWIS MACNAMARA.

Author of "Murry Mulligan's Revenge," "Among the Little People," "A Perfect Faith," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE glory of summer lay upon the land. Stately tree and swelling upland stood dressed in holiday attire—each wearing its chosen green—to do honour to the great burnished sun, who flung his halo over everything, making all the exquisite harmony of light and shade. The distant cliffs that stood knee-deep in the sea had drawn about them their dark mantle of gorse, encrusted with its gorgeous, flowering gold, and every little bush by lane-way and stream had set wild flowers—dog-rose, sweet-briar, and the rest—in its tangled meshes as a village maiden hastily decks her hair for the dance.

Down in the gardens where the ivy-covered Grange stands deep in its trees, the dainty flowers in trim rank and file were keeping the feast in more orderly fashion, if with more pomp and circumstance, than their gipsy sisters in forest and field. That is where the Kingscotes live — Mrs. Kingscote, and her son, and Cicely Villiers, who is her adopted daughter. They had been a merry party all the spring, for Beatrix L'Estrange had been there since March, and wherever Beatrix was she made everybody as gay as herself.

Reginald Kingscote and the girls were on the sands this glorious afternoon, making the dogs swim races for sticks until there were no more sticks to be found.

"I never saw such a 'barren, barren shore,'" said Beatrix, searching about in the sand; "all the sticks we brought down are gone out to sea, and there isn't another anywhere."

"We may as well go back to tea, then," said Kingscote, "since our only amusement is gone. Grant is coming for a game of tennis."

"Do come, Trix," pleaded Cicely, who was tired of dry sand and wet dogs.

"I suppose I must; I want my tea. But I am tired of tennis; I shan't play this evening."

"You must, to make a fourth," said Cicely.

"Yes, for the entertainment of the Rev. Mr. Grant, forsooth! Because the reverend gentleman wishes to exercise himself at tennis, I am to have the inestimable privilege of serving him with nice gentle balls."

"How ridiculous you are, Trix. You know you like him."

"Oh, he's not bad, you know," said Trix, with the faintest blush in the world; "but we don't quite hit it off, Cis. I am distinctly a layman's woman. I don't understand his 'Dorcases,' and 'Mothers' Meetings,' and all the rest of it."

"Why do you talk so much about them to him, then?"

"These are proper subjects of conversation for an ordained priest, my dear," answered Beatrix with mock solemnity.

"Is it proper to flirt with an ordained priest?" asked Cicely demurely.

"Couldn't be more so; especially when he likes it."

"Likes it? Well, I suppose he does. I never could conceive Mr. Grant indulging in such a pernicious amusement until you came here. You'd make any one flirt, Trix."

"I should unless he began of his own accord," said Trix flippantly. "But where's Mr. Kingscote?"

"Here he is," said Cicely, looking back. "He's coming with the dogs, and Mr. Grant is with him. He must have walked out by the beach."

"And here come all the dogs," cried Trix, lowering a crimson sunshade to receive a charge of five dogs. "Go away, Sancho! Ginger! go down! If you soil my skirt I'll never throw things for you to swim after again!"

But the dogs insisted on pretending that they hadn't seen her for a year, and danced round seeking a weak spot in her defence, until Kingscote and the curate came up and drove them off.

"You might have run, you know," said Trix, looking aggrievedly at the curate.

"I'm sure I'm sorry I didn't," he said; "but to tell the truth, I didn't think you were in any immediate danger."

"I wasn't, but my dress was."

"I never thought of that," he confessed.

"You are very stupid, Mr. Grant," said Trix severely, whereat he opened his mouth to answer, but remained dumb, for he never was quite sure when she was serious.

"You two people have begun quarrelling as usual," said Kingscote. "Come home to tea, and don't set a bad example to your parishioners, Grant."

"I'm not quarrelling. Mr. Grant tried to begin it, but I wouldn't," said Trix calmly. "Now don't look incredulous," turning to him, "it's rude. I'll forgive you if you will help me to get some sea-anemones."

"Oh, Trix, do come. It's long past five."

"How greedy you are, Cis!" said Trix sweetly. "You two can go on—we'll catch you up long before you are at the Grange. I want my tea far more than you, but I nobly endure the pangs of hunger in the pursuit of culture!"

"Don't be long, then; Reginald and I will go on."

Trix gathered her white skirt about her dainty ankles and walked down the shingle to where the wet rocks raised themselves above the tiny wavelets that tried to leap them.

The curate walked by her with great contentment. He was a tall, fair-haired man, with rugged, manly features and innocent, childish blue eyes which looked strangely out of keeping with the rest of his face. He met few girls in his country curacy, and never gave a second thought to any until Beatrix L'Estrange came into his life; she fascinated him from the first, though it was with a charm that was not altogether pleasant. For her little affected airs and flippant speeches jarred on the big, honest man, who still held his mother as his ideal of what a woman should be. But he believed, though sometimes it was hard, that beneath the frivolity—that had a charm of its own too, he allowed—there were all the noble and tender feelings that make a good woman such a precious thing.

When they came to the shore she pointed out what she wanted, and the Rev. Anthony Grant went down on his knees and grubbed about the sides of the slippery rock, much to the detriment of his broadcloth. Trix stood with her dainty toes almost in the water, and directed the operations. The curate laid his spoil on the sand, and tucking his sleeves up further returned to the fray.

"There are some fine ones there," he said, pointing to a flat rock some feet out in the water, and with one great stride he was on it.

"Bravo!" cried Trix. "I'm coming too," and laying her parasol on the shingle, she made ready to jump.

"It is too slippery," he said, "you had better not."

"Of course I shall."

"It is much too slippery. If you really want to come, you must let me carry you," he added simply.

"And what would your charming, enlightened congregation say if they saw you carrying me about the coast?"

"I don't care. But you mustn't try to jump."

"Mustn't? Who says so?"

"I do," he said quietly. "I won't allow you, as there is no one else to prevent you."

"You can't prevent me."

"Yes I can, and I shall," he said, stepping ashore and standing next her.

Trix coloured with vexation, and looked up defiantly at him, but her eyes fell beneath his, and she turned away, saying:

"Well, come home, then, and don't bully."

"I'm sorry," he said, gathering up the wet sea-weed, "but I couldn't let you, you know. It wasn't safe."

Trix was on the point of saying something to make believe she was angry with him, as she had many a time done to his exceeding discomfort, but something in the manly simplicity of his manner checked her, and she walked by his side in silence. It was the first time any one had mastered her, and she found the experience rather pleasant than otherwise.

"You aren't angry with me?" said Grant presently.

"No. It was very kind of you," she answered, in a lower voice than she meant to, and without raising her eyes.

But there was enough in her tone to make the man's big heart thump at his ribs, and he would have called her by her name, his

honest eyes all alight, but before he could get the word out the slimy weeds slipped through his fingers to the ground, and the spell was broken.

She laughed at his awkwardness, and insisted on carrying them the rest of the way herself.

They found the others drinking tea on the tennis-lawn, and Trix told them that she had to carry the "nasty wet things" because Mr. Grant couldn't. Kingscote brought her tea and waited attentively on her, while his mother looked up from the work she held—she was always doing strange devices in crewel work—and smiled approvingly. Grant had an abstracted look, and hardly joined in the conversation. Then they played tennis, and Mrs. Kingscote sat and worked.

She was a spacious lady, Mrs. Kingscote, as placid as the summer sea, and her chief virtue was her love for her son, and that did duty for a lot of other virtues which were absent. One of those excellent Christians she was, whose pet and only philanthropy consisted in marrying other people to each other. She had brought about more than one hopelessly ill-suited alliance in her day, a crime which she invariably laid to the charge of the allied pair; for she always felt that she had done her duty, and that any subsequent friction on the part of the unhappy couple who had reaped the benefit of her worldly wisdom was in very bad taste. She had two peculiarities in her plan of campaign which were a little trying. One was a candour which was variously termed "barefacedness" or "brazenness," according to the degree of friendship professed by the many unappreciative critics of what they euphemistically termed her "little games." The other was her persistence in using the first person plural of the pronoun when she announced her most daring schemes, by which subtlety she blandly enrolled all present as fellow conspirators. And now she was full of plans for her son's immediate future. She had it all settled long ago. Dear Reggie is to marry Beatrice L'Estrange, and Cicely is to pair off with the curate. What could be more natural?

"Of course, we would like to see Cicely mistress of the Grange," she had said to the Vicar's wife; "but dear Reggie ought to marry where money is, and I think Cicely will accept Mr. Grant."

And while she sat in her basket-chair, thoughtfully examining silks of every hue, her busy brain was plotting and planning. She determined to take Cicely into her

confidence that very night, and give her a hint as to the line of action that would further the cause. So when the game was over and Mr. Grant had taken his leave, she gathered up her work and called Cicely to her.

"Let us walk in the orchard," she said; "I have something to tell you." And there she disclosed all her hopes and plans. "We can see she likes him, and I'm sure he's always with her."

"Is he?" said Cicely faintly. "I thought Mr. Grant——"

"Oh dear no! You have no eyes, my dear. Why, only the other day he said to me—— But here he is"—as Reginald came in through the gate. "Cicely and I were having a little chat."

"It's chilly to be out without a wrap," he said, looking at the girl. "Let me bring you one."

"No, thanks," she said quickly, "I am going in."

Kingscote looked after her as she went with a perplexed face, and half-turned to overtake her.

"Come for one more round, Reggie!" said his mother, slipping her arm through his.

"What's wrong with Cicely?" he asked, presently.

"Nothing, dear."

"But there was."

"Oh! I think not. Do you know," after a pause, "I quite look forward to seeing her settle near us; it would be so nice."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, Mr. Grant is sure to get the living."

"Go in, mother mine," said Kingscote; "it's getting cold. I'll be in when I have had a weed."

"What a funny, abrupt boy you are," said his mother, looking up at him fondly. "Don't stay out in the dew; you look quite white already," and she rustled off.

Kingscote stood still, staring at the ground, and mechanically turning over the coins in his pocket. So Cicely was going to marry Grant! Dear little Cis—marry somebody else! it seemed impossible. They had always been as brother and sister until the last year or so, and he had thought a hundred times since then of asking her to marry him; but they were so much together, and Cis seemed so happy as they were, and, besides, he had not yet been called to the Bar—all these things put it off, but only for a time; now it was too

late. Grant had seen her every day of the year, whereas he only saw her at Christmas and summer, and, of course, she—Great heavens! how lonely it was! And there would be no excuse for getting away until the end of August. Anyway, Grant was an awfully decent fellow; he could not grudge him anything—but this.

When he went in the rest were in the drawing-room; Beatrix was at the piano, and called him to turn over for her. As he crossed the room he looked at Cicely, but she would not meet his eyes for the first time in their life, and as he stood by Trix he wondered why she had avoided his glance. Did she know he loved her? Heaven knows, she must have seen it often enough in his face! Well, now that he knew how things were, he would not annoy her with his attentions. When Cicely did look up from her book, she found Mrs. Kingscote trying to attract her attention by waving a skein of flame-coloured silk, and when their eyes met, the good lady nodded with enthusiastic significance in the direction of the pair at the piano.

Cicely tried to smile in return, but it was a poor attempt. She had long known that Kingscote was more to her than any one on earth, and it was dreary work smiling congratulations on his devotion to another. Not that she could see any devotion—she told herself that; but then what if he had taken his mother into his confidence?

Mrs. Kingscote sat up later than the rest, smiling to herself as she built castles in the air, and sent her gleaming needle in and out like a benign and portly fate placidly working out a destiny for short-sighted mortals.

The next day the barrier which had begun to grow between Cicely and Kingscote had assumed proportions such as might have been the work of years, and in a few more days they had quite learnt their parts, and played to each other with apparent ease; only each knew how hard it was, and how it hurt. Kingscote's part was that of the not too affectionate brother, and he treated Cicely with a cold familiarity that passed muster excellently well. Cicely was the better actor of the two, though she suffered more—for the iron enters deeper into a woman's soul, if she is a good one—and she assumed the rôle of candid good-fellowship, which was the harder to play, because it used to come naturally; and so, for a time, they deceived every one but themselves.

Mr. Grant was away for this week, but

Trix reminded them of him occasionally by putting a collar of white paper on Kismet, the old black cat. "Be good, and I'll dress you like my big clergyman," she'd whisper in Kismet's disreputable ear, frayed with fights; and then she danced him on his hindlegs and introduced him as the curate. She saw a good deal of Kingscote just then, who avoided Cicely as much as possible; and Cicely, looking on, thought it was quite natural that they should be together, and tried to cultivate unselfishness to an extent she had never tried before.

Mrs. Kingscote, blissfully unconscious of the cause, noted that Reginald sought Trix out more than he used, and congratulated herself and Cicely. "How thankful we ought to be that things are going on so well," she would say, plying her needle as usual.

Trix found Cicely and Reginald but poor company all that time, and confided more than once to the weather-beaten Kismet that she wanted her big clergyman back again. When he came, as it happened, she was the first to meet him. He overtook her in the wood when he was taking a short cut to the Grange. She saw him coming and turned away to hide the blush she felt rising. He made no disguise of his joy at meeting her, but hurried forward with his eyes blazing boldly all he felt. She greeted him casually, without offering him her hand, and scolded him directly for standing on a tiny wild flower she declared she was going to pluck.

Disappointment sent all the light out of his honest eyes, and he stooped humbly to gather the crushed floweret.

"I'm afraid it is spoiled," he said, looking at it doubtfully.

"Of course it is; you may throw it away. And it is the only one daisy I have seen this year," she added dejectedly. Grant looked so abjectly repentant that she relented suddenly: "Dear, stupid old goose, he thinks I'm angry with him," she said to herself. Then aloud: "Never mind, I'll forgive you. Come on, or we'll miss tea."

Grant strode by her side in silence, keeping his eyes fixed on the ground, while Trix glanced up at him from time to time as she chatted and laughed without waiting for an answer. They were almost at the edge of the wood when he laid his great hand lightly, and even reverently, on her arm, and if she had looked up at his face then they might have understood each other in time. But she was afraid to raise

her eyes until he would speak; when he had told her what she knew he would, then it would be easy; and she stood, trembling a little, unconscious of her burning cheeks, only listening for his voice. When he spoke again his voice was deeper, but as musical and as quiet as ever.

"I want to tell you——"

"Is that you, Beatrix?" broke in Mrs. Kingscote's voice through the trees. "I can see your hat; I knew you by the way you do your hair. Wasn't I clever?" she shouted. "I'll join you in a moment, the paths cross on here," and a vision of a bonnet of steel-coloured beads hung with jet, looking like a helmet cut down and fitted up as a bonnet, flitted through the trees.

At the first sound Trix snatched away her arm and walked on.

"I must see you—alone," said Grant in a low voice. "When?"

"I don't know. To-morrow."

"Here, at this time?"

"Perhaps!"

"I was sure it was you," cried Mrs. Kingscote, appearing where her path found theirs. "And Mr. Grant! So glad to see you back."

"I was going to the Grange," said Grant composedly. And they continued the way together.

Mrs. Kingscote entertained them until they reached the house, and throughout tea-time, with a description of some new people she had been to see, whom she euphemistically described as "very pleasant, and all that, but not quite—quite, you know!"

The curate had to go almost immediately, and Mrs. Kingscote took Trix's arm in a sweet motherly way, that would have shown to such as knew her that she was up to one of her "little games." To tell the truth, she had seen more than Trix's hat, by stooping to peer through a friendly laurel bush, and she felt it her Christian duty now to put her spoke in Fortune's wheel, which seemed to have taken a turn not to her liking.

"The man's making love as sure as I'm looking at him," she had murmured, and that of course was not to be endured. So when she led Trix away in sweet converse, she told her she had something to say to her in confidence. "I think I ought to tell you, my dear," she purred. "I'm afraid from the expression on Mr. Grant's face when I met you that he was being a bit sentimental." Trix recoiled. "Perhaps

I'm wrong," she added, interpreting the movement to suit her tactics, "but, anyway, you ought to know that he is as good as engaged to Cicely. You needn't look like that. Cicely and he are old friends enough to understand each other thoroughly, and, of course, they are not demonstrative. But I just thought, you know—he lives so much in the country that, and quite naturally, too, he might have taken a fancy—a passing thing, of course—to you. You are so different to Cicely, you know, so taking"—"As if I were the scarlatina, or something," thought Trix—"that you would have a great charm for a man like him. But I know you will not interfere with dear Cicely's happiness, now that you see how things are. Run off now and dress for dinner, and don't be angry if I have made a mistake. You know dearest Cicely is like my own daughter," and she playfully pushed the girl away.

Trix did run away, and was barely in her room in time to hide the scalding tears that chased each other down her cheeks. She saw nothing but truth in what Mrs. Kingscote said; she had never felt worthy of him, and it had often seemed impossible that he, with his great noble heart, could love her who had flirted more or less with every man she met.

Poor little Trix! It was the first time real love had taken hold of her life, and then it took such a hold that life seemed a new thing with it—and nothing without it—and this, only to find that she was spoiling another's happiness; nay, what was worse, likely to spoil the happiness of the man she worshipped with all the self-abandonment of a woman who knows her weakness for a man she knows to be strong! She saw the truth of all Mrs. Kingscote had said. Cicely was just the sort of girl his nature could love and respect. How could he respect her when he knew her as she knew herself? It was easy to see how a passing fancy for her could have taken hold of him; for she had, from mere habit at first, done her best to win his admiration, and a man as genuine in every thought and deed as he was would be slow to find out what was shallow in her. She thanked Heaven that chance had prevented his speaking to her in the wood; for she knew he would have asked her to marry him, and she knew she would have said "Yes"; and afterwards, when he learnt what she really was, he would compare her with Cicely, and find his life undone. How could she forgive herself for weaning him

away from Cicely! She had very nearly made them both unhappy through her selfish vanity; thank Heaven, she knew the truth in time to spare them, though it was to hurt herself with a hurt that could never be whole.

The next day was spent in feverish anxiety. The hours seemed to drag each more slowly than the last, for she wished that the ordeal she had set herself to go through were over, full of fear lest her resolution would desert her.

At length the time came when she had promised to meet Grant. She had only said "perhaps," but she knew that he would be waiting. Kingscote offered to carry the basket and trowel she took, but she told him it would be much kinder if he stayed at home and kept Cicely company, at which he gave her a look she could not understand.

Grant was at the trysting spot when she came, and greeted her more quietly even than usual; only his eyes showed her how hard a task she had to do.

"I'm glad you've come," she said, as saucily as she could, "I want some one to carry my basket."

"I shall carry it, then," he said, smiling; "but I must tell you now, what I began to——"

"Shouldn't advise you if it's a secret," turning aside to dig up a young fern; "the wood is full of paths."

"I must tell you now," he said, in a low voice that trembled with feeling.

"I tell you this place has no more privacy than—than a rookery. You had better not talk secrets now."

Grant looked at her in perplexity. Would he ever understand her! She felt his eyes on her and stooped again to the mossy bank with the trowel, but her eyes were blinded with tears and she knew she must give in. Grant watched in silence until a great drop fell on the little brown hand that grasped the fern shoot.

"Miss L'Estrange!" he cried, "Trix! You are crying," and flinging away the basket he was holding, he stretched out his hands, infinite tenderness in every line of his strong face.

"Well, if I am?" she said defiantly, standing up and viciously drying her hand on her jacket. "I suppose I can if I like?"

"For Heaven's sake be serious; let yourself be serious. What is the matter?"

"You made me cry," she sobbed.

"I? I who love you with all my strength!"

"No, you don't. You only think you do."

"For Heaven's sake do not jest," he cried in agony.

"I mean it," she forced herself to say. "If you knew me, really you wouldn't. I made you, on purpose."

"Why?"

"I always do."

The strong man drew a quick breath that sounded like a sob, and his teeth showed white between his trembling lips. Trix dared not look at him in the pause that followed, but kept her face buried in her hands. At length he spoke in a low, trembling voice:

"I see how it is. I am sorry I distressed you. I would to Heaven you could care for me. I shall go now. Heaven bless you—dear!"

She could play the part no longer. Without turning round she stretched out her left hand to him in mute appeal, still hiding her eyes in the other, and oh, the joy when she felt his strong clasp close on it.

"Yes, yes!" he said, kissing it pitifully, "I forgive you. Could I do else?"

And it was not until his footsteps died away that Trix realised that he had not understood.

CHAPTER II.

SURELY it is a great and good gift from on high that grants to some natures an intensity of feeling that lesser souls cannot comprehend; and when joys are in the way such as these drink deeper draughts than others. But when sorrow comes which would we be! For the same gift becomes a capability for suffering of which lesser natures know nothing. They but taste the bitter cup; these must drink to the dregs.

Anthony Grant was a man whose whole individuality lay in his intensity of feeling, and his love for Beatrix L'Estrange was the greatest thing that had come into his life. Such men as he can love a woman with the ideal love that lives not here alone, but must go on, "out into the dream beyond," and this was how he loved Trix. To destroy this was to destroy half his life. His first feelings after the daze of pain had gone were not of resentment—there was none of that. They were of great pity for her. He understood, or thought he understood, how she had never thought he would become really fond of her, and even upbraided himself for his stupidity in taking all she had done and said since

they met so seriously. He told himself that if he were more used to the ways of women he might have seen that she did not really care for him; other men in his place would probably have known that. So he went about his work as usual, but determined to avoid the Grange, thinking more of Trix than of himself.

And what of Trix? Nobody could understand her during those days—even Mrs. Kingscote was at a loss. She was as merry sometimes as ever, planning excursions and parties, and was the very life of them all; but sometimes she was so sad and quiet that Cicely wondered if she missed Kingscote, who had left his home on some excuse.

Meanwhile, Grant never called, and Trix, knowing the cause of his absence, felt that she still stood in the way of Cicely's happiness, and was angry with him for keeping away, though she dreaded their meeting. She pondered deeply how she might put him at ease when he did come, so that she would not frighten him away any longer. She dared not try to flirt, even ever so harmlessly, for, in the first place, she couldn't trust herself, and, in the second, she would be ashamed. Moreover, a display of sisterly affection and kindly feeling wouldn't do; she knew men too well to think that. And she couldn't meet him in the ordinary way, for she must give herself some part to act that would serve as a cloak of refuge for her real feelings; so there seemed nothing left but to quarrel with him. And this she determined to do. She knew that, with all his breadth of thought, he was staunchly loyal to the tradition of the Church, and this, as well as his keen patriotism, offered a fair field for encounter.

He did come in a week or so, and was received by Mrs. Kingscote and Cicely; but the former soon hastened off with a great show of business that signified nothing.

Trix came into the room without knowing Grant was there. She felt the blood rush to her face, but collected herself with an effort, so that she might not make the meeting harder for him. He greeted her perfectly calmly, however, and she was annoyed to find that she felt it most. She thought he would change colour, and perhaps be silent, but it was she who did both; he was perfectly natural, though perhaps a little grave.

Chagrin at her own discomfiture was a useful tonic to Trix, and in a minute

she was chatting and laughing almost in the old way. She could act better than he, and soon it was his turn to wonder at her sang-froid, when he remembered her as he last saw her. Her gaiety jarred on him, for, as Trix had thought, he was too genuine himself to hastily set others down as insincere; and he went away more than ever convinced of the heartlessness she had accused herself of.

After that Trix was in worse spirits than ever, and the seasons of gaiety disappeared altogether. She found his seeming indifference harder than anything else. She knew that what she wished—or perhaps only wished she wished—was that he should forget his fancied attachment to her, and be true to Cicely; yet, at the first sign of such a state of things, she felt a new pain which was not without a tinge of resentment. She despised herself at first for such a want of purpose, and wondered if she were ever so selfish; for she was fully convinced that Grant did not, could never, really care for her as she felt it was in him to love, and it seemed a crime to wish him still bound by chains which in time he fain would break. Yet she wished it all the same, and decided that the exalted ideal of love that is all unselfishness was not hers. And perhaps she was right.

Her low spirits, which continued after Kingscote came back, troubled Cicely more and more, and if he had ever caught the look of pained yearning in those dark grey eyes, he must have sought the cause and found—everything.

So these four people suffered, each one striving more or less after a noble unselfishness that need not be, and only destroying each other's happiness by sacrificing their own. Only Mrs. Kingscote, the prime cause and fountain-head of it all, still went her way in serene complacency, and wrought with a chaste industry at the evergrowing Destiny. Supremely unconscious of the troubled times she lived in, she saw signs only of the happy issue of events. Her son's moodiness had not escaped her, but that only showed that a disturbing influence had come into his life, and her puce silk swelled with triumph and all the emotions of a mother at such a crisis.

She never doubted for a moment that this was "a maiden passion for a maid," and of course the maid was Beatrix. Who else could it be? Now were all her hopes to be realised, and that right early.

"We may congratulate ourselves," she chirped confidentially to Cicely. "I'm sure

there's no mistake what's come over dear Reggie."

"Do you think she cares for him?" queried Cicely as casually as she could.

"Well, until quite lately I really thought she didn't," lowering her voice as if awed by the incredibility of the idea; "but I think it is all right now. Beatrix has quite changed. Who could help liking dear Reggie?" she added, with all the prejudice that makes our mothers believe that we are superior to all other women's sons. We like it, though we know it is not true; they like it because they are sure it is.

Cicely thought that Mrs. Kingscote was too sanguine, and, mentally reviewing Trix's manner of late, came to the conclusion that she did not care for Reginald—yet; but she, too, believed it hard that any one could help doing so.

It was about this time that Trix took to quarrelling with Grant. He tried to avoid it at first, but soon realising the perfect safety in the proceeding, indulged himself thus much, as it was the only passport to her society he would allow himself, and even though her petulant accusations against many things which were sacred to him jarred inexpressibly, yet she was too dear to him to drop out of his life all at once.

He soon began to look forward to these encounters. So did Trix; and she always had something ready, some gauntlet to fling down which he was ever eager to pick up, and he broke many a lance for Church and State.

Cicely saw this with troubled eyes. It was hard to give up Reginald, but it was made infinitely harder when she had to see him losing his chance of happiness too, for she knew that Trix sought and enjoyed her battles with the curate.

"Why are you always squabbling with Mr. Grant?" she asked her at last.

"Good for him," was the laconic answer.

"Have you his welfare so much at heart, then?"

"Oh, no!" cried Trix, with the haste of conscious guilt. "I really don't care—much. Of course, he's very nice," she added apologetically, "and I respect him, you know; but——"

"Have you given up making him flirt?"

"Long ago; I have indeed, Cis," earnestly. "Besides, I couldn't teach him."

"No, I shouldn't think so," Cicely said quietly, and Beatrix thought what a perfect faith she had in him.

Cicely believed what Trix told her, and thought that Kingscote might still be successful if he tried to win. She hardly knew whether this made her more or less sad. She would wish that she could put his happiness before anything else; but the knowledge that Trix was still free for him was not of unmixed pleasure.

He chanced to join her that night in the garden, where everything was sleeping in the soft starlight except the nightingales and the drowsy perfumes of the flowers. They had hardly been alone together once since the night, three weeks ago, of their interview with Mrs. Kingscote in the orchard.

They walked to and fro in silence. Kingscote wished he had strength to go away, for the fairy charm of the summer was stealing over him, and he felt the temptation to plead his cause with the girl at his side was taking possession of him.

Cicely was all in white, and had drawn a soft, white wrap over her head which she held at her throat with one hand.

Kingscote paced moodily up and down, and she could see how pale he was even in the dim starlight. Her heart ached for him, [and she stealed herself to tell him what Trix had confessed. It would be pain, but what harm if it smoothed the sad lines away that had come in his face of late! To do that was all the joy left her. But he wouldn't speak, and she did not know how to begin.

At last she took courage.

"You are troubled about something; don't be angry; I can't help noticing it."

"Yes," he said slowly, without raising his eyes, "I have been a bit bothered; I suppose there's no use denying it."

"None; but perhaps," said Cicely, clenching her hands in the dark in the effort to steady her voice—"perhaps I can—help you."

Kingscote started.

"No, you can't," he said quickly; "nobody can."

"I think I can. I think—I know—what it is."

"You do?" said he, stopping to look at her.

"Yes," she faltered, turning her head away. "Isn't it——"

"I will tell you," he said, with an effort to be calm. "Though you know already, let me tell you now—myself. It is all——"

"Cicely! Are you mad! With this dew falling! Come in, come in!" and

Mrs. Kingscote bustled across the grass and bore her off.

"I'm glad I was spared that," she thought, shuddering. "I could not have listened to the story of his love for her. It would be too great torture."

And Kingscote, left standing alone in the night, muttered: "She knows it, then—knows I love her, and wanted to say something kind to me. Dear little girl! Heaven bless her!"

He went up to town next day, saying he would not be back till Saturday.

"Some little trinket for Beatrix, I suppose," said his mother delightedly to Cicely, and she worked in two new shades of silk.

Trix found the day very long; Kingscote was away, Cicely writing letters, and Mrs. Kingscote would talk only of the prospect of Cicely and the curate, or enumerate Reginald's good points. Now, the first of these subjects was gall to drink, and as for the second, when a woman is altogether interested in one man, a catalogue of the virtues of another is but Lenten fare. So she called all the dogs, who came rejoicing, and started aimlessly for a walk.

She soon found herself turning towards the place in the wood where she had met Grant, and changed the direction at once; but it was only to come to it by a longer path. She stood once more where she had stood with him, and where she had stretched out her hand to him to bring him to her. How plainly it all was burnt in on her memory! He had stood there; he had rested his arm on that tree when he began to talk. There was the spot where she had stooped with the trowel to hide her tears, before they became too many to be hidden. A little blue flower that had bloomed there hung withered now. She wondered if her scalding tears had fallen on it and killed it.

And the tears were beginning to come again when the dogs announced, in various keys, that some step was approaching. Then they charged the new-comer with a brave show of chivalry, but finding it was only the curate, they saluted him hastily and raced back to tell their mistress.

He greeted her gently, as usual, and talked of every-day things for a while, then raised his hat and continued his way. But before he had gone a dozen paces he turned back as if by some irresistible impulse, and stood looking down on her.

"I cannot help it," he said, almost sadly, "I must ask you: Is it the same answer? Am I nothing to you still?"

She felt his eyes on her, and dared not look up. The struggle was terrible. Why not give in, take what happiness she could? Even if he had loved Cicely, could she not make him forget her, and though his love might die when he had learned how unworthy she was of him, yet would it not be worth it?

"Why do you torture me?" she cried, wrestling with her love.

"Forgive me!" he said; and left her.

She remained standing there after he had gone trying to see that it was better that he should have misunderstood her again, and that all she had suffered for in the past three weeks had not been undone by a moment's weakness; for if he had known the anguish that made her cry out, and had pleaded his cause, or even drawn a step nearer, she felt she must have surrendered.

She dried the tears that hung heavy on her lashes with a childish gesture, rubbing first one and then the other with the back of her wrist, and when she raised her tear-stained face it looked so pale and sad that Ginger, who was wagging his stumpy tail slowly, stopped suddenly and stood with it twisted round at an absurd angle.

"Dear little dog," she said, stooping to kiss his black muzzle, "you are sorry, aren't you?"

Then the others crowded up with condolences, and when they had all been caressed, in the fulness of their joy, they pretended Sancho was a rabbit and hunted him home, arriving there twenty minutes before Trix.

The next day was Sunday—the last Sunday that the house-party would be together. Mrs. Kingscote was about to begin her annual round of visits which would last till the autumn, and was taking Cicely with her; Trix was going home, and Kingscote had begun to look up rods and guns.

The Grange pew was empty in the morning, to the dismay of sundry ladies who relied on it for the fashions. But it was fully occupied in the evening, when the golden sun streamed in through the open door, and the black-bird's song filled every pause in the service.

The spell of the coming parting lay on them, and Grant's deep voice trembled at the last words that dismissed his little congregation. When he came out of the vestry, in cap and cassock, everybody was gone, and he turned sadly homewards. He had half hoped to see Trix even for a

moment; and though it was forced in on him that it would be better if they never met again—so hopeless was he for himself and full of pity for her—yet that could not drive away the awful sense of loneliness with which he sought the tiny house he called his own. But before he had gone a score of paces he remembered the sexton's little child that lay ill in the cottage by the church, and he retraced his steps with a lighter heart; for to bring comfort to those in trouble or need was always a joy to him.

He went in through the little green gate, and up the flagged path between the neatly clipped borders of box. The door stood open and he went in without knocking, assured of the welcome he had earned long since. He stood, hat in hand, inside the door—he had to stoop his great height to pass through—and looked across to where the sick child lay in an old arm-chair, his wan little face lit by the last lingering rays of the setting sun. And there, kneeling by his side, was the woman who would have him believe she was selfish and altogether heartless. She was putting flowers in a cracked mug that the child held in his little hands, smiling up at him as she told him how she had gathered them for him, her great brown eyes shining bright with the soft brightness of tender sympathy.

The curate stood still, loth to destroy the picture; but she was conscious of his presence immediately, for his big frame darkened all the little room, and she looked up without moving.

It was only the glance of a moment, but he saw in those soft eyes all that had seemed wanting in her before, all the infinite pity and tenderness which is Nature's dowry of a good woman. From that moment he knew that the girl he loved was not what she would have him believe, and that she could not have dealt so with him, to win his love for amusement alone.

There must be something between them that he did not know, and he vowed he would know it that night. He spoke to the child, and then chatted with the mother, who hovered about in raptures at the kindness of the "fine Lunnion lady" to her sick child.

When Trix rose to go he stood up too, and, bidding the good people good night, left the cottage with her. She was going by a path that skirted the wood—a short cut to the Grange, she said—and would have parted from him there, but he asked to go a part of the way with her, and Trix was glad.

For some time they walked in silence. Grant kept his eyes bent on the ground, wondering how he could say what he wanted without giving her pain, for her cry to him of the day before still rang in his ears. Trix was silent, and wished the distance were ten times as long as it was.

"I want to ask you something," he said at last, without lifting his eyes. Trix's heart gave a great bound, whether of joy or dread she never knew. "You go away in a day or so," he went on, with the vibration which is so pathetic in a strong man's voice, "and I cannot let you pass out of my life—you who made it so sweet to me—for a while." She cast a look entreating for mercy. "Forgive me if I pain you, but I cannot let you go until I know the truth."

"I told you," she said piteously, "I tried to make you fond of me at first."

"And you knew—you must have known I loved you afterwards," he said, stopping in his earnestness. Trix stood silently by him. "And yet you did not send me away, you even let me think—For Heaven's sake don't cry—darling. I am not reproaching you. I would not have foregone that time even if I could have foreseen everything. But you are not as heartless as you pretend. I don't believe you could be cruel; I don't believe it. What is it? What is between us?"

"You know—you know!"

"I know nothing. Tell me, and end this!"

"You know you mustn't like me when you loved Cicely long ago," she cried, as if the words were wrung from her by pain.

"I? I didn't! Oh, Trix, it is not true. I never loved any woman but you—you!"

"Then you really—!"

"No, I never did. I love you," taking her hands. "And you?—Dearest!" . . .

Later she said:

"Come with me to the edge of the wood—Tony," and they went together in the growing light of the moon.

When they reached the open the sound of voices came to their ears, and presently Mrs. Kingscote appeared with Cicely and Kingscote. She hurried forward to meet them as they stepped from the shadow of the trees.

"Here you are at last. And Mr. Grant, I declare! How is that poor child? Indeed I've been intending to go and see it all the summer, but there never was a moment. But you are very late, my dear; R-ggie was quite anxious. Nothing's wrong?"

Trix stood very close to Grant, and softly pinched his arm under the cover of dusk. It was the tiniest pinch, but he understood.

"Nothing is wrong, indeed. On the contrary, Miss L'Estrange has promised to be my wife."

"Beatrice! But you—surely—— I mean—Reggie——" and she turned in helpless amazement to the others, who stood behind.

But as the curate finished, Kingscote and Cicely had involuntarily looked full in each other's eyes, and in that one glance by the light of the moon they read the truth. He stretched his hand out in silence, and in silence she took it and held it close. So, when his mother turned to him in her confusion, he said quietly:

"And Cicely is going to be mine."

"And indeed," said Mrs. Kingscote afterwards to the Vicar's wife, "I was so upset that I put my crewel work away somewhere that night, and I don't know what became of it. I never found it since, and I was getting on so well. I wish I could have finished it!"

THE FATE OF A FLIRT.

By E. L. PHILLIMORE.

CHAPTER I.

"I SHOULD really be quite good-looking," said Lesbia, pensively regarding herself in the glass, "if it were only not for my nose! There is so much of the Jew about it. It is really very unfortunate."

She stroked that somewhat Roman feature as she spoke reflectively, regarding it sideways this time by means of a small hand-glass.

"There's no smoothing it down—or rather up," she went on; "the curve at the end is too hopelessly pronounced for anything. There is no doubt that my profile does not suit me at all. It's so horsey somehow. What do you say, Jenny?"

Jenny, who was sitting on the floor tailor-fashion engaged in sewing together an enormous tear in her cotton frock, replied without looking up:

"But it is too thick, Lesbia. That betokens a certain coarseness of disposition, you know."

"How brutally frank you are, Jenny," said Lesbia, turning away from the mirror with a disgusted air. "I don't believe it is so bad, after all. At any rate, looking at it seems to make it worse."

"Have you ever asked Frank Gilroy what he thought about it?" asked Jenny, industriously stitching away.

"Good gracious, no! It is the aim and object of my life to keep him from thinking that I have a nose at all. I should certainly be mortally offended if he ever referred to it."

"Perhaps he admires it," said Jenny hopefully.

"Well, people in love have very odd tastes," allowed Lesbia, "but that doesn't make things any more satisfactory to me. It isn't Frank who suffers from nose."

She went to the window and flung it wide open, leaning out as far as she could to gather a piece of the trailing honeysuckle that threw its arms all over the warm red walls of the house.

"Do you know," she went on, after she had secured an artistic spray, and was busy fastening it in her slender waistband, "I am not at all sure that I like Frank Gilroy well enough to marry him."

"Isn't it rather a pity to come to that conclusion only six weeks before the wedding day?" said Jenny with sarcastic severity.

She had finished her mending and was still sitting Turk-fashion on the floor. But this time she was looking at Lesbia.

"It is a great deal better than finding it out six weeks after the wedding," said Lesbia with an elderly air. "I sometimes feel that I have made a mistake."

"Frank is very fond of you," said Jenny, tossing back a mane of tawny hair, and gazing at her black-browed sister more scrutinisingly than ever.

"Oh, that—yes," said Lesbia scornfully, "but that isn't all I want. I am sometimes afraid that Frank is too inclined to take me lightly—as a sort of joke, in fact. He never talks really seriously to me. If I do break it off——"

"Goodness gracious, Lesbia, you would never be so mad! Whatever would papa say?"

"He would be a great deal madder, no doubt," returned Lesbia serenely. "He is delighted that one of his daughters is to marry Mr. Gilroy of Harewood Grange. He only thinks of the fact that Frank is very rich, and that I shall henceforth walk in silk attire instead of making my own cotton frocks. But I look at things in a different light, and just now I don't feel sure that I love Frank. I wish I could tell."

Jenny got up and began to collect her

belongings—cotton, scissors, thimble, and various scraps of different coloured prints—in the lap of her frock, which she held up for the purpose.

"Frank is coming here to-night," she said curiously. "Shall you ask him?"

"Ask him what?"

"Whether you love him or not. He ought to know if anybody does."

"Dear me, child, what strange ideas you have!" said Lesbia, who was aged twenty-one years. "It is because you are so young, I suppose. Nobody could ask a man such a question as that. I shall find out for myself somehow, I dare say."

"I think Frank is very nice, and awfully good to you," said Jenny loyally. "My only objection to him is his beard. You can never tell what a man with a beard is like. He may have no chin, or an under lip that sticks out, or something of that kind. It is so deceptive."

"Not that nice pointed Charles the First type," said Lesbia contradictorily. "I always think it looks like one of Vandyck's pictures."

"Well, there is the dressing-bell," said Jenny, preparing to leave the room. "I do wish papa would not insist on late dinner and all that fuss when we have hardly a rag to put on. Of course, eating one's dinner at eight o'clock seems to keep one in touch with rich people, but I'd rather have less ceremony and more pudding."

After Jenny went, Lesbia crossed over to the glass once more and critically regarded herself. She was certainly handsome, in a rich, dark, Oriental fashion. But that nose! She gave it a last despairing stroke as she went downstairs.

After dinner, which was served with all the delicate nicety that Colonel Dixon's soul loved, they went out to sit on the stone terrace, where the flags were hardly even yet cool after the intense heat of the day. There was still a lingering glory of sunset in the sky, though a pale crescent moon was rising, fair and youthful, in the purple vault. Lesbia remarked upon its beauty.

"Yes, yes," said her father, rather irritably, "it's very pretty, I dare say. But I am past that sort of thing, my dear. You must talk it over with Gilroy. I have no doubt that you and he could admire it for hours."

"Frank isn't in the least sentimental," said Lesbia with a sigh.

"So much the better, then."

"I don't think so. He is too frightfully matter-of-fact for anything."

"I know he is going to behave in a very handsome way about the settlements," said Colonel Dixon, "and that is a great deal better than making love by moonlight."

At this juncture Mr. Gilroy himself appeared. He was a tall, handsome man, with a fair, pointed beard, and a pair of deep blue eyes, which, when they rested upon Lesbia, became rather quizzical in their expression.

"Hullo, Gilroy, glad to see you!" said the Colonel, stretching out a lazy hand to his guest. "Here is Lesbia pining for the sight of you."

"Are you, Lesbia?" said Frank Gilroy, sitting down on a bamboo lounging-chair opposite her, after having previously pressed a somewhat limp hand.

"I was just saying that you did not care for sunsets," rejoined Lesbia without looking at him, "and papa, with his usual vivid imagination, has construed that into a desire for your presence."

"Lesbia is in a mood to-night," said her father, with a slight laugh. "I think I will leave you to combat it single-handed, while I go indoors and see why Parker doesn't bring the coffee."

"Where is Jenny?" said Gilroy, who betrayed no violent desire to be alone with the lady of his heart.

"She's gone over to the Seymours. I told her she wasn't to go—but I might as well tell a cat not to mew. I can't do anything with either of my girls, Gilroy. It is to be hoped you will have more influence over Lesbia than I have ever had."

Lesbia's lip curled slightly as her father disappeared in at the French windows which led into the drawing-room. Her lover regarded her more quizzically than ever.

"Something put you out?" he demanded airily.

"Put me out? Certainly not," said Lesbia. "What is there to put me out?"

"I don't mean extinguished, you know," said Gilroy in pleasant explanation, "nothing could ever put you out in that way, I should say. I meant ruffled."

Lesbia fixed her eyes on the rising moon, and tried to curb her growing irritability. She made no reply to his speech.

"It's awfully hot," went on Frank Gilroy after a little pause; "one might as well be on a gridiron as on this terrace. Let us walk about for a bit."

Lesbia rose, with the air of a martyr who sees the faggots being piled round him at the stake, and they strolled up and down for some time together in silence.

"I'm going to bring over a friend of mine to-morrow," said Gilroy, "if I may. He's staying with me for a couple of weeks. I think you'll like him—Blake, the artist."

"Oh, pray bring him by all means," said Lesbia with a slight yawn, "he may liven us up, perhaps."

"I shouldn't call him a lively bird myself," said Gilroy carelessly. "I want him to come over here to paint your portrait."

Lesbia stopped for a moment to smell a damask-hearted rose before she answered him.

"What do you want my portrait painted for?" she asked rather indifferently.

"Because I am fond of you, I suppose. I can't think of any other reason," said Gilroy, in his most matter-of-fact tone.

"I won't have it taken side-face," said Lesbia with great eagerness, her listlessness dropping from her like a garment. "I would rather not be painted at all."

"Why not side-face?" said Gilroy good-humouredly, turning to survey her in the half-light. "What is the matter with your side-face?"

"Oh, nothing particular, only I don't like profiles," said Lesbia hastily.

"But I do," said Gilroy placidly.

Lesbia said nothing for a moment. Then she spoke rather bitterly:

"I don't think we have a single taste in common, Frank."

"No?" Gilroy turned his blue eyes upon her. "Not a liking for jam tarts? We first met over a jam tart, remember, Lesbia."

Lesbia did remember. It was at a picnic, and they had disputed gaily over a piece of damaged pastry. Later on he had come to call upon her father.

"Yes, it was a jam tart that brought us together," repeated Gilroy serenely. "Do you remember how sodden it was? A soda-water bottle had——"

"Why ever do you trouble to talk about that stupid picnic?" cried Lesbia crossly. "I only remember how wet it was and how miserable."

"Yes. We sat under a hedge that leaked horribly, and imagined it was a kind of shelter! I began to fall in love with you when you were so firm about refusing that ham. You have a truly Jewish aversion to pork, Lesbia."

But the word "Jewish" was an unfortunate one, and Lesbia became crosser than ever.

"I'm sure I don't know why we ever met," she said petulantly. "We are not a bit suited to each other."

Gilroy took out his cigarette-case and struck a match.

"Have you been feeling like this long?" he asked in the respectful tone of one who seeks for information on a subject which is at present dark to him.

"Much longer than you think," said Lesbia with dignity.

Gilroy threw away the match, and put the cigarette between his teeth.

"That's a pity," was his sole remark.

Lesbia came to a standstill with a stamp of her foot.

"You don't understand me in the least," she cried impatiently. "I can't think why I ever said I would marry you! You always treat me as a joke, and never as if I were a rational being at all. I can tell you I am getting tired of it. You had better not try it too far."

Gilroy did not look at her as he replied:

"Don't you think that some things are best treated as jokes? This conversation, for instance? I shouldn't care to take it seriously myself."

"I don't care how seriously you take it," said Lesbia, moving away from him, "and as for your painter-person, I shall refuse to see him."

Later, when Jenny had returned, Gilroy captured her and demanded why Lesbia was in such a temper. Jenny shook her head at him reprovingly.

"It was very stupid of you to suggest that she should be painted in profile," she said; "you know how sensitive Lesbia is about her nose."

But Gilroy, instead of being properly abashed, stared at her for a moment, and then burst into a fit of laughter. He had entirely recovered his good-humour.

"It is more serious than you think," said Jenny crushingly, as she bade him good night.

CHAPTER II.

THE breath of August lay over all the land. The earth, cracked and baked with the vivid sunshine, waited thirstily for the rain that never came. In the cornfields, ripe and glowing, gleamed masses of scarlet poppies; the scent of hay was in the air. The Manor House looked provokingly cool on such a day as this, with its white muslin curtains and shady rooms. Lesbia and Jenny looked cool too, in their simple white gowns. Gilroy declared that the Manor House was the only place in the neighbourhood in which it was possible to draw the breath of life.

Lesbia's portrait had been begun. A little ashamed of the ill-temper she had shown on the subject of the "painter-person," she had been amiable enough to him when Gilroy, to whom her fits of temper never made any difference, brought him over to see her on the day he had originally appointed for the purpose.

Rupert Blake had been enthusiastic at once, and Lesbia had caught some of his enthusiasm. She was to be painted sitting in the great old garden under a shady tree, with a background of old-fashioned flowers—lupins, and snapdragons, and white and gold lilies, and the purple "love-lies-bleeding." She was to wear her everyday frock, and her garden-hat was to have a wreath of scarlet poppies round it.

Jenny hovered about, slightly disapproving of the new element which was being introduced into the Manor House, and which was henceforth to have easy access there. She expressed dislike to Rupert Blake's velveteen coat and large, mild eyes. She declared that he wore his hair too long, and that his figure always reminded her of a weeping willow.

After the first week of sittings Lesbia defended him with suspicious energy.

"At any rate," she said with dignity, "Mr. Blake has got a soul, which Frank certainly has not. He is a thorough artist and a most cultivated man."

"You think he has a soul because he spouts poetry to you and flatters you," said Jenny shrewdly; "but Frank is worth a dozen of him any day. I hate the very sight of Rupert Blake, and I am not coming to any more of these silly sittings. I can't think how you can bear the creature near you."

Lesbia flushed a little. She felt that she was misunderstood. She gave Mr. Blake a sitting that very afternoon. It was the eighth, and everybody knows that when a woman has sat to a man eight times they are either very good friends or very bitter enemies. Lesbia and Rupert Blake were very good friends.

Jenny, true to her word, was lying upstairs in her own room in the enjoyment of a forbidden novel. Gilroy had had some business to transact at the village, six miles off, and would not be back in time to preside over the painting. Indeed, he very rarely did so. He occasionally lounged in to make some remark about the portrait, which was sure to arouse Lesbia's smouldering anger, but he generally left the artist and his model pretty much to themselves.

Blake busied himself with his easel, and Lesbia arranged herself in a consciously graceful position in her bamboo chair. The garden made a charming background for her rich dark beauty.

"Has the heat been trying you much?" asked the artist sympathetically, as he set to work. "I thought you looked a little pale when I came first."

"No, I like the heat, thanks; I am a perfect lizard in that way," said Lesbia, smiling; "but it is very kind of you to notice my looks."

Gilroy had seen her at lunch-time and had not only omitted to ask her if the heat tried her, but had never mentioned that she was pale.

"Kind! it is not difficult to be kind to you," murmured Blake in his softest voice.

He really admired Lesbia Dixon immensely. He thought her one of the handsomest women he had ever seen. He wondered if she had money. The Manor House was kept up in good style, and the plate and china were beyond reproach. He decided that the Colonel was well off, and began to speculate vaguely thereon.

"I wonder if the poppies in my hat are faded? I forgot to ask Jenny to gather me some fresh ones," said Lesbia, changing the conversation.

"They are perfect—they are no more faded than you are," said Rupert, surveying her with his mild admiring eyes. "You are almost too handsome for me to paint."

"Why?" asked Lesbia, much flattered. Gilroy never paid her compliments of this kind. She made a mental note of the fact.

"Because when I look at you I forget to paint," he answered boldly.

"How very foolish you are!" Lesbia laughed faintly. "You cannot call me good-looking when I have such a—such a nose!"

She felt so thoroughly in sympathy with the artist that she could afford to mention this injured feature to him without feeling in the least uncomfortable. She was sure that he would treat the subject with tact. She would rather have perished than mentioned it to Frank, who would only have laughed in his brutally matter-of-fact way, and chucked her under the chin, and told her not to bother her head any more about it. He would have told her that if he didn't mind it, why should she? And this was not the way Lesbia wished to be treated at all.

She had not misplaced her confidence in Rupert Blake.

"Your nose is delightful," he murmured—his voice seldom rose above a murmur when he was speaking to a woman—"it always reminds me of Tennyson's 'Maud.' Don't you remember the line, 'The least little delicate aquiline curve in a sensitive nose'?" Isn't it a beautiful description?"

Lesbia felt it was both beautiful and soothing. She squinted doubtfully down at the feature in question. It was nice to think that it had been aquiline all these years and that she had found it out at last.

"I am afraid it isn't exactly 'delicate,'" she said deprecatingly. "Jenny says it is thick."

"It is no more thick than Cleopatra's was, I'll venture to say. And think what havoc she wrought in the world. Indeed, you are of the Cleopatra type altogether. I have often thought so."

It was very pleasant to be so understood and appreciated. Lesbia resolved to look up all about Cleopatra and her nose at the earliest opportunity. She reflected that Frank would have been incapable of drawing such apt comparisons if he had been engaged to her for a hundred years. But then she always knew that Frank misunderstood her every action as well as her every feature.

Rupert Blake painted on in silence for some time after this. A light breeze sprang up and faintly ruffled the waving meadow grass in the fields beyond. A delicious coolness crept into the hot air.

"Oh, how nice!" said Lesbia, stretching out her arms and forgetting her pose for a moment.

"I wish I had begun to paint you like that instead of this," said the artist admiringly, stopping to look at her.

"Like what?"

"With your arms stretched out, and that eager expression on your face. As if you were waiting for some one whom you loved. I have never seen you look like that before."

Lesbia's arms dropped to her side.

"It would be rather a fatiguing pose," she answered a little coldly, resuming her former position.

Blake took up his brush again and painted away in silence for some time. At last he said:

"You are not angry with me, are you?"

"Why should I be?" said Lesbia.

"For what I said. I suppose I caught the look that is generally reserved for—a

happier man; and I ought not to have remarked upon it. But I am glad I have seen it once, even though it is not for me."

Lesbia flushed. There was a secret delicious terror to her in listening to speeches like this. She was drifting—and she was drifting wilfully.

"If you think that I ever look at Frank in a ridiculously sentimental fashion," she said carelessly, "you are quite mistaken. He would not know what to do with such a look if I were to bestow it on him."

"I have sometimes feared he did not understand you," said the artist in his lowest voice.

"He does not understand me in the least," returned Lesbia with unexpected readiness. "I don't think we have a single idea in common. Of course he is very kind," she added, in hasty compunction.

"Oh, yes, they always are when they don't understand you," said Rupert Blake, with unconscious sarcasm. "It is the only way they can make up for the lack in themselves."

Lesbia wondered if this were true. She pulled a long-stemmed lupin towards her, and began to idly strip off its blue flowers.

"I wonder!" she said in a low tone.

"When it comes to wondering, there is generally something wrong," said the artist, putting away his brushes, and not looking at her. "Do you honestly think that you and Mr. Gilroy are suited to one another?"

"N—no," said Lesbia hesitatingly. "I suppose we aren't. But they say extremes meet, don't they?"

"They meet uncomfortably sometimes," said Rupert Blake.

Lesbia was silent. Then she looked towards the house.

"It is tea-time," she said, in a different voice. "I can hear Parker rattling the cups and saucers—welcome sound! And there is Frank coming over the lawn to see how you have been getting on."

As she spoke Gilroy's tall form drew near them. Lesbia contrasted its stalwart proportions and almost aggressive manliness with the graceful, drooping, artistic figure before her. At present Frank was in her bad books, and she preferred grace to strength.

"Hullo," said Gilroy, lounging up to them, "have you two been hard at work ever since lunch?—for I consider you work the hardest of the two, Lesbia. If so you must be pretty well baked."

"There is a delicious breeze just now," said Lesbia rather primly, taking off the poppy-wreathed hat, and beginning to play with the crumpled petals; "we have found it most refreshing."

"Let us see how you are getting on," said Gilroy, going round to the easel without further remark to Lesbia. "Oh, I say, this won't do at all, old man! You are flattering her most egregiously."

Rupert Blake smiled in a resigned way, and Lesbia coloured angrily.

"Lesbia isn't that spiritual type at all—and you have made her lips too Rossettiish for anything. The background's very nice. Those lupins come out well, and make a nice bit of colour."

"It seems to me you think more of the background than you do of me," said Lesbia, betrayed into an exhibition of ill-temper. "Papa thinks it is very like."

"Oh, I dare say. He'd say anything," returned Gilroy carelessly; "but you must see for yourself, Lesbia, that this isn't your nose at all. I can't think what you've done to it, Blake, but never in the world did it grow on Lesbia's face."

"I only portray it as I see it," said the artist with a slight smile; "to me the portrait seems excellent."

"It is idealised in a most ridiculous fashion. You'll excuse me for putting it so bluntly, my dear fellow, won't you?" Lesbia felt that the apology for this brutal rudeness was due to her and not to Blake. "But the fact is, a man wants to have a picture of his wife as she really is."

"I am not your wife yet," said Lesbia in a voice that he alone could hear, rising from her seat, and throwing her Oriental shawl over one arm, "and perhaps I never may be."

The bitterness of the voice was so unmistakeable that Gilroy stared at her in blank amazement. He saw that something had seriously offended her.

"What is the matter?" he asked aloud rather anxiously, going up to her and taking the shawl from her. "What makes you speak like that, Lesbia?"

Exasperated at his want of tact, Lesbia moved away without vouchsafing him either look or answer.

The artist watched them with a slight smile. Surely this was not a very devoted couple!

"What is the matter?" persisted Gilroy, walking on in front with Lesbia, and leaving Blake to follow after with all his paraphernalia. "What have I done?"

"You needn't have insulted me before Mr. Blake," said Lesbia, scarlet with mortification. "If you think me plain I don't see why you should tell him so."

"Really, Lesbia, you are too childish," said Gilroy, his anxiety abating and his annoyance rising. "Do you mean to tell me that I am to stand by and watch Blake painting you as you have never been in your life and not say a word? I love you for what you are, not for what——"

"I don't believe you love me at all. You don't care how I look or what I wear. I have a frightful headache this afternoon and you have never noticed it."

"How could I tell you have a headache?"

"Mr. Blake knew it in a moment," said Lesbia; "but then he has some sympathy, and you haven't a scrap. He saw how pale I was at once."

"You have colour enough now, at any rate," said Gilroy, looking at her in some bewilderment.

"That is because you have made me walk over this blazing lawn without a parasol," cried Lesbia, putting her hand to her flushed cheek.

"I never noticed——"

"Of course you didn't. You never do! I don't suppose you would notice it if I were to have a sunstroke before your very eyes."

"I'll go and fetch you a——"

"Please don't trouble. We are half-way to the house now. I left my sunshade under the tree where I was sitting. Mr. Blake will bring it, no doubt. He never forgets things. He is very thoughtful. This is the first time I have ever walked to the house without a parasol."

"You surely are not angry with me because I forgot a little thing like that? I thought you were above this sort of thing, Lesbia," said Gilroy, looking at her with a slight curl of the lip.

"Oh, I don't mind in the least, and I am not at all angry," said Lesbia with a vicious toss of her head. "You can neglect me as much as you like, and call me as plain as you please. What does it matter to me?"

"I am not going to take notice of such an absurd display of temper," said Gilroy quietly, unfastening the French window for her that she might pass through. "You can't be well, or you wouldn't talk such nonsense."

Lesbia turned on him with a whole world of tragedy in her eyes.

"You may wake some day to find that

it is not nonsense," she cried, "and then perhaps you will be sorry you haven't treated me properly. There is only one person who ever has understood and sympathised with me, and that is——"

"Mr. Blake?" said Gilroy in his most imperturbable tone, standing aside to let her pass. "Yes, I begin to see the situation, Lesbia. What a pity it is I am not more like him!"

CHAPTER III.

It wanted three weeks to Lesbia's wedding day. The portrait was not finished. The sittings under the shady tree were still of daily occurrence. Gilroy never came to them now, he stood aloof with a coldly scornful air. He would give Lesbia her head, as he put it to himself, and see how matters would end. He had no idea of posing as an injured rival if Blake wooed, and wooed successfully. Lesbia should certainly have a free hand.

Jenny, always his loyal friend, had remonstrated with her sister in vain on her persistent flirtation with Rupert Blake. But Lesbia had merely shrugged her shoulders, and told Jenny sharply that she was the best judge of her own affairs.

This particular afternoon Jenny was watching the artist and his model from the open window of her bedroom. She could see that Lesbia wore an unusual expression of interest and animation, and that Mr. Blake was more gracefully sympathetic than ever. She shook her little fist at the pair, and her eyes filled with angry tears. Surely, surely Frank was worthy of a better fate than this. She bit her lip harder than ever presently when she saw Lesbia take a damask rose from her slim belt and give it to Rupert with a blush and a smile. To Jenny this act of coquetry was also an act of disloyalty and wickedness. She turned from the window and threw herself on the sofa, burying her face in the soft old cushion on which she had sobbed out many of her childish griefs. But this grief was not a childish one, and it was beyond finding relief in tears.

Lesbia came in presently to find her lying there, very still indeed.

"Come down to tea, Jenny," she said, walking over to the glass and smiling at her own glowing image; "Mr. Blake has finished for this afternoon and we are going to have it out on the lawn."

"I don't want any tea, thanks," said Jenny shortly.

"Why ever not? What is the matter with you?" said Lesbia, turning round and surveying her sister's pale cheeks with astonishment. "Are you ill?"

"No, I am not ill. Lesbia, do you really mean to marry Frank Gilroy in three weeks' time?"

"I don't know, I am sure," returned Lesbia carelessly; "there is plenty of time to think about it."

"If you are, I think the way you are going on with Mr. Blake is positively disgraceful," said Jenny, her honest indignation bursting forth at last, "and how Frank can stand it I cannot think."

"Dear me, what a fuss you are making," said Lesbia sharply. "If Frank doesn't complain I am sure no one else has a right to. He is too much of a stick to care what I do."

"He is not a stick! He is the best and nicest man I ever knew," said Jenny wrathfully. "He bears with your behaviour because he loves you so, and is so patient. He is a thousand times too good for you."

"Dear me," said Lesbia again, "what makes you take the cudgels up on his behalf so eagerly?"

Jenny turned her face away so that the scarlet flush that crept into her cheeks should be unobserved.

"I can't bear to think you could throw over such a man as Frank for such a flippant, frivolous creature as Mr. Blake," she answered.

"Well, the fact is," said Lesbia, sitting down by the open window, "I am tired of Frank."

A silence fell on the sisters after this. Then Jenny said in a muffled voice:

"Shall you tell him so?"

"I suppose so—some time."

"This is Rupert Blake's work, I suppose," said Jenny scornfully; "he has been making love to you behind Frank's back."

"He has been doing nothing of the kind. But I feel he is the only person who has ever understood me."

"How can you be so wicked as to want to break Frank's heart?" cried Jenny angrily. "All that talk about being 'misunderstood' is such nonsense. You will never get any one else to understand you as well as Frank."

"We shall see," said Lesbia, leaving the room humming a little tune.

She and Rupert Blake had their afternoon tea together that afternoon alone. Jenny was firm in her refusal to appear.

Late in the evening Gilroy rode over

from Harewood Grange to see Lesbia. He found her walking about the garden alone in the dim purple twilight. Colonel Dixon had gone out, she told him, and Jenny was in bed with a bad headache.

"So you are all alone, and I am to have you entirely to myself," said Gilroy with a slightly mocking intonation in his voice; "it is a long time since I have been able to really talk to you, Lesbia."

Lesbia did not reply. She wrapped herself a little more closely in the white shawl she wore.

"But we shall have plenty of time to talk by-and-by, shall we not?" went on Gilroy after a moment's pause; "you will be my wife in three weeks' time."

Lesbia looked at him in the dim light. She suddenly realised that this was not a man to be lightly offended. He was patient and long-suffering, but this patience and long-suffering had its limits. He had loved her dearly—none knew that better than she—but the love had its limits also. His handsome face looked rather grave and stern. His manner was anything but lover-like.

"The fact is, Frank," she said at last, "I begin to think we have made a mistake."

"Is it not rather late in the day to begin to think that sort of thing, Lesbia?"

"I dare say it is. I can't help it, I am sure. But we should never get on, Frank, and it's much better to find it out now than when we are married."

"I have tried to be patient with you, Lesbia, and to take no notice of your continual outbursts of temper and petulance," said Gilroy firmly, "but the time for an explanation has arrived at last, and I mean to have it."

"It's entirely your own fault," said Lesbia irrelevantly; "you never were in the least nice to me, or seemed to care."

"You knew I cared. I have not petted and pampered you as one might pet and pamper a favourite lap-dog, I confess. But as long as I thought you loved me, I would have laid down my life for you any day. If you had loved me, Lesbia, you would have understood me."

"Well, I understand you now, at any rate," said Lesbia tartly, "and I don't want this farce to go on any longer."

"Do you mean that you wish our engagement to be at an end?"

"Yes. I am tired of it. We should never get on."

She took off her engagement ring and looked at it. With a sudden burst of anger Gilroy snatched it from her and flung it far from him into the shrubbery.

"There, that is the end of it all," he said harshly; "and I know well enough whom I have to thank for this piece of work. It is that wretched apology for a man who flatters you till your head is turned. I wish you joy of him."

"You are very rude!" said Lesbia, rather frightened at his tone.

"Of course I have seen it coming on for some time," went on Gilroy, taking no notice of her. "These sentimental, poetical speeches that you enjoy so! I never made love to you like that, thank Heaven! but I'll wager my love for you was as much stronger than his as sunlight is stronger than moonlight. But it is dead now, and you have no more power to hurt me. I'm not even going to say that you have destroyed my faith in women, which is what most men would say under the circumstances, because you have not. You've not even ruined my life, Lesbia."

"You are talking very unkindly," said Lesbia, distinctly annoyed that he did not show more regret at the cancelling of the engagement. "I am sure I don't want to ruin anybody's life. I am very sorry about it."

"Are you?" He laughed a little. "I believe you care so little about my feelings, Lesbia, that you would ask me to be best man at your wedding. You haven't an atom of heart."

"Yes, I have—for the right person."

"And the right person is Blake, I suppose," said Gilroy, biting his lip. "Well, as I said before, I wish you joy."

"You talk as if Mr. Blake and I were engaged."

"What? Have you really waited to be off with the old love before you are on with the new? From what I have seen I should not have imagined that to be the case."

"If you are going to talk like this," said Lesbia, "I think I had better go in. Good night."

She held out her hand as she spoke. Gilroy looked at it scornfully, and then burst into a harsh laugh.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "you can bid me good night and good-bye as calmly as though we were mere acquaintances of a week! We who have pledged ourselves to pass all our lives together, and who, in three weeks' time, were to have been man

and wife! They say some women have no feelings, and I suppose you are one of them. I could find it in my heart to hope that you will be punished for this, Lesbia."

"I have told you I am sorry," said Lesbia with stiff impatience.

"Yes—but in such a tone! Almost as if you hated me! And this is to be farewell for ever, Lesbia?"

"I suppose so."

"Then it shall be for ever! With me there is never any going back on my word. Once broken our troth shall be always broken. If you were to find that you had made a mistake and were to come and tell me that you loved me best after all, I warn you that it would be useless."

"I am not likely to tell you such a thing."

"Good-bye, then," said Gilroy, just touching her hand with his outstretched fingers. "Good-bye, Lesbia. I believe I know you better than you know yourself, and that you will find out your mistake—when it is too late."

He turned and left her.

With a certain sense of triumphant uneasiness Lesbia prepared for her last sitting to Rupert Blake. She had not told her father of her broken engagement; she dreaded his anger too much. But she had defiantly flung the gauntlet down before Jenny, who, pale and angry, had spoken to her as she had never been spoken to in her life before.

"You have flung away a flower for a weed," she had said, "the substance for the shadow. You deserve to be unhappy, Lesbia."

But Lesbia did not look at all unhappy this afternoon as she sat in her poppy-wreathed hat smiling into Rupert Blake's large brown eyes. She felt there was a romantic flavour about this new love which the old had never possessed.

"And so this is our last sitting!" she said, as the artist took up his brushes. "I shall feel quite dull without my pleasant afternoons."

"How sweet of you to say so," replied the artist. "I wish I could believe it is true. As for me, I dare not tell you how I shall feel. My lips are sealed, and I cannot tell you all that is in my heart."

Lesbia blushed and looked down. Evidently Frank had not confided to his friend the dismal fact that he had been jilted.

"Have you seen Mr. Gilroy this morning?" she asked rather nervously.

"Yes," answered the artist in a sighing tone. "I have."

"And what did he—how did he seem?" demanded Lesbia, unable to refrain from asking now Frank bore himself under the blow.

"He seemed the same as usual—in rude, almost vulgar health. Some people are so aggressively strong," said Rupert, his slight figure bending more than ever.

"And he didn't say anything about—me?" asked Lesbia, who was not pleased at the idea that Gilroy should be going about as usual.

"No. But why should we speak of him? Let us talk about ourselves."

"But I must speak of him. I want to tell you something. You remember I said that Mr. Gilroy never understood me?"

"I remember—yes. It was very sad. You deserved to be understood," said Rupert, mildly sympathetic.

He had discovered that Colonel Dixon was not the rich man he had supposed him to be, and the quality of his sympathy and admiration was now neither so pronounced nor so warm as formerly.

But Lesbia rushed upon her fate.

"Well, after you talked to me, I seemed to see things more clearly. I realised that it would never do for me to marry Frank. It would be frightful to pass one's life in the society of a person who constantly misunderstood one—and so I have broken our engagement off."

There was dead silence. A light wind ruffled the scarlet petals of Lesbia's poppies, and shook a few of the blue lupin flowers to the ground.

"Isn't it a pity to cancel an engagement so hastily?" said Mr. Blake, in a business-like tone. "Have you thought it over thoroughly?"

"Quite thoroughly. I have considered the question most carefully. I wonder Frank has not told you."

"Well, I suppose a woman knows her own heart best, but I confess it seems to me that you are making a mistake," said Rupert, busily painting at Lesbia's eyebrows and looking at his model quite unmoved. "Gilroy's a good fellow."

"I thought you would have sympathised with me at once. You have always insinuated that we were not suited to each other."

"Oh, there you are quite mistaken, my dear Miss Dixon. I merely asked you if you were quite sure that you had chosen

the right man, because there seemed to be so much, er—friction between you occasionally. But of course you are quite right to break off the match if you feel that you are not going to be happy. Only please don't speak as if I had anything to do with it. Indeed my serious advice to you is to reconsider the matter."

Lesbia turned sick and faint. So this was the man for whom she had given up her lover! This man who had made disguised love to her for weeks, had caused her to break her troth, and who now told her in the coldest of voices that she had better "reconsider the matter."

After a pause the artist spoke again:

"I take so deep an interest in you, Miss Dixon, that I shall hope to hear that you will soon have made up your little tiff with Gilroy. I am going abroad next week, and I shall expect to hear of you soon as Mrs. Gilroy."

"You are going abroad?"

Lesbia fixed her eyes upon him. She wondered if she had ever made Gilroy suffer as she was suffering now. The pain, the shame, the humiliation, of having given this man her love unasked seemed to stifle her.

"Yes—abroad," said Rupert airily, surveying the portrait with his head on one side. "I have had enough of England for the next couple of years at any rate. One rusts here. I want to make some studies of Egyptian scenery. You should persuade Gilroy to come abroad too after you are married. We might make up a party."

Lesbia smiled bitterly.

"I shall never marry Frank," she said in a low voice. She was thinking of his last words to her. She knew now that he held her in light esteem, and that she had fallen from her high estate.

"Well, don't worry about it," said Rupert cheerfully. "Come and look at the portrait, and tell me what you think of it."

Lesbia rose and went over to the picture of herself. She stood musingly gazing at it for a few moments. Then she turned to the artist.

"Frank was right," she said, with a hard little laugh. "You have flattered me, and it does not suit me to be flattered!"

A year later Gilroy, who had been absent from home on a prolonged holiday, found himself once more riding down the country lanes where he and Lesbia had once walked together as betrothed lovers. He was so

heart-whole that he smiled as he thought of that far-off time, and he switched at the sweet-scented hedges with his riding-whip as he passed, out of pure gaiety of heart.

As he turned a corner, he came face to face with Jenny, who was on foot. He dismounted and walked beside her. They had not met since the day when he had gone away from the Manor in the character of a rejected lover. That time was uppermost in both their minds.

"Lesbia is wretched," said Jenny, after a little desultory conversation, in her brusque manner. "When are you coming to see her?"

"Never!" said Gilroy uncompromisingly.

"You know that animal painter went away without proposing?"

"I imagined so when I heard he was in Egypt. But I wasn't aware that he was an animal-painter."

"You know what I mean. And Lesbia is sorry now."

Gilroy stopped and took one of her hands in his.

"Believe me, my dear loyal little Jenny, when I tell you that were Lesbia the last woman in the world, I would never, never marry her. She has shown herself too heartless. I did not go abroad to get cured of my very foolish infatuation for her, because I was cured before I went."

Jenny sighed, and turned away her head. She had done her best, and how hopeless that best was the expression of his face told her.

"But I have come home with every intention of marrying a wife," went on Gilroy, trying to look into her beautiful dark-fringed grey eyes, "and I think I shall be very thankful to Lesbia for having treated me so abominably."

"Why?" The grey eyes turned and met his now, full of honest surprise.

"She has shown me the difference between false and true," said Gilroy, smiling at her. "Jenny, don't you understand me?"

And stooping, he kissed her hand.

LOVE.

By SUSAN K. PHILLIPS.

"Love the gift is love the debt,"

Take the lesson, sweetly set.

O cold youth! to whom love's boon

Comes as roses do in June,

Fresh and fragrant, lightly won

By the misses of the sun;

Blooming equally for all,

In wild or parterre, cot or hall.

Take the gift so freely given
As the richest under Heaven ;
It will light the darkest day,
It will smooth the roughest way ;
Hush the sigh, recall the smile,
Full and patient all the while,
Only never quite forget,
"Love the gift is love the debt."

For a dreadful day will come,
When eyes are dim, and lips are dumb ;
Or love reluctantly may turn
From the hearts that proudly spurn ;
Wearied of the chill reply,
Of the happy hours let by
Of baffled yearning, vain regret ;
"Love the gift is love the debt."

Then in full the tribute pay,
Give the pittance while you may ;
Blossoms droop and sunbeams fade,
Of the dark hours be afraid ;
Lest some day you vainly plead
For help and strength in bitter need ;
Think, when hope and faith are met,
"Love the gift is love the debt."

SCUTTLED.

By T. E. SOUTHEE.

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CHAPTER I. "ALL IN THE DOWNS."

It was a dull, dreary morning in November when a stage-coach, drawn by four handsome greys, stopped at the door of a large red-bricked house, situated at the extremity of High Street, in the ancient and loyal city of Canterbury. The door was immediately opened, and an old grey-headed footman brought out a quantity of luggage, which was duly hoisted up and deposited on the roof. This done, the guard took his seat, vociferated "Now, sir!" and then blew a short, sharp blast on his horn.

While all this was going on outside, in the hall, a young man of two-and-twenty was folded in his mother's arms in a long, mutual, and loving embrace.

To tear himself away, to kiss and bid adieu to his sisters, and to wring the hand of faithful old Robert, was the work of a moment, and the next he was on the box by the coachman's side.

The guard blew a long flourish on his horn, the horses pranced, the driver cracked his whip, and away they went, the "Phoenix" bowling along towards the great metropolis.

The lady whose only son had just departed was the widow of Dr. Gilmore, a physician of good repute, who had died lately rather suddenly, and at his death his widow found herself in that very disagreeable and anomalous position, designated by the world "in reduced circumstances." This same world said a good many rather

cruel things about the doctor and his wife, about their extravagance and improvidence, and pretended to have a large amount of sympathy and pity for the widow and her family; but it did nothing to help her, and when it was reported that her son Charley was going out to the West Indies to look after a sugar plantation, which had been left to Mrs. Gilmore by an uncle, who died in Trinidad—which said plantation had not of late years brought any adequate return to its owner—it only laughed and said he was going on a wild goose chase.

Charles Gilmore's destination in London was the Commercial Road, where resided his uncle, his father's brother, a merchant and shipowner, to whom he was to pay a short visit previous to his departure. But of his journey to London and this visit I have nothing to say. His passage had been arranged for by Mr. Gilmore in a West Indian trader, the "Euphemia," of Aberdeen, classed A 1 at Lloyd's, Martin Farley captain and part owner.

As is often the case, the vessel was not ready for sea on the day appointed for sailing; but as it was said she was under engagement to break ground on a certain date, she hauled out of the dock and dropped down to Gravesend. Mr. Gilmore was informed of this, but it was stated that the passengers were not to join the ship until she was ready to sail. Accordingly on the third morning Charles and his uncle started for Gravesend.

On arriving there they engaged a boat.

"What ship, sir?" asked the boatman.

"The 'Euphemia,' a black barque, with a yellow streak."

"She's gone, sir, sailed last tide."

At first Mr. Gilmore seemed inclined to doubt the man, but on pulling about and not finding her among the vessels at anchor, he became convinced that he was right.

"What the deuce does Farley mean by this?" he exclaimed. "I don't understand it!"

"What's to be done?" asked Charles.

"Take the coach and go on to Deal; she'll be sure to anchor in the Downs," replied the waterman.

This was accordingly done, and they arrived at Deal late in the evening. It had been a cold rainy day, the wind blowing freshly from the south-west; but towards sunset it had increased to a gale, with an unpromising blackness in that quarter, and the sun went down lurid and red.

To Mr. Gilmore's enquiry if the "Euphemia" had arrived, the answer was that she had "just put back."

"Put back!" he exclaimed. "Well, I don't understand that fellow Farley. It almost seems as if he wanted to shirk taking you, Charley. If he wasn't an old fellow, with a wife and family, I should think he fancied you would prove too attractive to his lady passengers!"

"Lady passengers!" echoed Charles. "I say, uncle, you are sly; you didn't say anything about ladies. Who are they, and what are they like?"

"Not so fast, my boy. Their name is Harding, and they are mother and daughter. I have never seen them. All I know about them is that they are Creoles."

"Creoles! Good heavens!"

"What's the matter now?" asked the uncle.

"Why, they are darkies, are they not?"

"No, they are pure white. If they had a particle of black blood in them, they would not be Creoles."

"Why, then, are they called Creoles?" asked Charles.

"Because they are born in the West Indies."

"Thank you, sir. I shall remember."

"Yes, you had better, for these Creoles are very touchy on the point of colour."

"What would you gentlemen like to take?" asked the landlord of the "Cinque Ports Arms," as he ushered them into a large and comfortable room, with a blazing fire in the grate.

"I'll have a glass of brandy-and-water, strong and hot," replied Mr. Gilmore; "and then we'll talk about something to eat."

"I'm not much used to hot grog," replied Charles, as the landlord looked towards him; "but under the circumstances I think I will follow suit."

"And now, my friend," said Mr. Gilmore, when the landlord returned with the grog, "this gentleman is a passenger going out to the West Indies. He missed the ship at Gravesend, and the men outside tell us she is now in the Downs. Is there any chance of his getting on board to-night?"

"No, sir; no, it's not to be thought of. I should not care to trust myself, or see any one else trust themselves, in an open boat on such a night as this. Besides, there's no occasion; the ship can't sail in the teeth of such a gale."

The supper was ended and the two sat

by the fire smoking, and, if the truth must be told, indulging in another glass of hot grog, when a dull, distant report, loud and heavy, came from the sea.

"What is that?" asked Charles.

"A ship in distress," replied Mr. Gilmore, and he took out his watch and listened, and ere the minute had quite elapsed there came the roar of another gun, and again another.

"There's a ship ashore, and the life-boat has gone out to her," said the landlord, who at this moment entered the room.

"I thought so," replied Mr. Gilmore. "I hope it is not the 'Euphemia.'"

"Can't tell, sir. It's the 'Gull' as fired."

"Well, I hope not; but at any rate it's an awful night."

They sat on smoking for more than an hour. The storm raged, and the heavy waves thundered on the shore. Stoicism may do its utmost, but it would be a poor heart which could not sympathise with those who were exposed to the fury of such a storm as was now raging, thought Mr. Gilmore.

"I can't help thinking of those poor ladies," said Charles, breaking the long silence.

"Yes, rather an unpropitious beginning to the voyage. You may thank your stars that you are not exposed to this gale."

"I do, sir, I do; but I hope it's not the 'Euphemia' that's come to grief."

"We are all in Heaven's hands, my boy, and I hope so also; but it's late, let us retire."

The following morning the landlord, having noticed the anxiety of the two gentlemen as to the wreck, and wishing to set their minds at ease, tapped at Mr. Gilmore's door and said:

"The ship has gone to pieces, sir; but the crew and passengers are saved."

"Thank Heaven!" was the response. "Do you know the ship's name?"

"Yes, sir, it's the 'Able Gower,' of London, a large ship bound to the Isle of France with a valuable cargo."

"How is the weather?"

"The gale is moderating."

CHAPTER II.

"A WET SHEET AND A FLOWING SEA."

CAPTAIN FARLEY was walking the poop-deck with a lowering brow, and was evidently in no very amiable humour. He was a man of about fifty years of age, and reported said that in his youth he had been

wild, and some of his acquaintances were wont to plague him by recalling the not very creditable escapades of former days, the remembrance of which did not seem of a pleasant character. It may be that the captain was recalling some of his youthful freaks, for his aspect was decidedly cross and ill-humoured. He was holding on to the mizen backstay watching a shore boat, which was pulling out and evidently making for the "Euphemia," and contained Charles Gilmore and his uncle, and he was muttering curses on the wind and weather, which had upset his little plan of sailing without the former.

"You would not listen to me, sir," said the mate, a short, thick-set man, with a broad, red face deeply pitted with the small-pox. "I told you we'd be best without him."

"Hold your tongue, Hicks," said the captain savagely; "it would have been all right if it had not been for this cursed gale. You know I could not have refused to take him."

"I suppose not; but it's deuced unfortunate."

"Yes, for him, at any rate. But here they are."

In another minute Charles and his uncle stood on the quarter-deck. Captain Farley got, as he expected, a good wiggling, and then, with a "Heaven speed you," and a cordial shake of the hand, Mr Gilmore went over the side, and Charles was fairly launched on his voyage.

The gale had to a great extent subsided, but it still blew strongly, and the sea was rough, and as this was Charles's first experience of stormy weather at sea, he very soon retired to his berth, and was prostrated by sea-sickness. How he passed the night he did not know; but after daylight the wind subsided, and he grew better and made his appearance in the cuddy, and was introduced to Mrs. Harding and her daughter Edith.

These ladies were old sailors, and had not suffered the miseries of sea-sickness, but they could still sympathise with those who did.

Independent of his recent sufferings Charles Gilmore was not in his usual spirits; he had left behind him all that he loved best in the world, and he was depressed and sad. Besides this there was something in the looks and manner of the captain and mate that repelled him; and this, and the fact that he had not slept on the previous night, induced him to retire early to his

berth to pass a second night at anchor in the Downs. When he awoke in the morning he found the wind had changed, and the ship was under weigh, bowling along down Channel with "a wet sheet and a flowing sea, and a wind that follows fast," much to the satisfaction of all on board.

The morning was fine and bright, and for the time of year warm, and when Charles came on deck he found the two lady passengers there before him. They greeted him kindly, and hoped he had passed a better night. Mrs. Harding, though past forty, was still a very beautiful woman, with all the grace of carriage and amiability and warmth of manner which are the characteristics of the Creole race; but it was in Edith Harding that these were most prominent. In addition to the delicate beauty of her form and features, her eyes, large and languishing, were horribly inclined to sparkle, and her mouth more often than not was garnished with the most roguish of smiles, luxuriant hair, small and beautifully shaped feet and hands, and a voice which was melody itself completed the charm which the grace of her carriage and the cordiality of her manner had commenced.

There is no place like shipboard to discover a man or a woman's character, and to make people you have never seen before either intimate friends or avowed enemies.

In the present instance, though Charles Gilmore forbore from all contentions with the captain and mate and warred not with their opinions, he was not long in discovering that if he valued his peace of mind he must not oppose or contradict his rather irascible skipper or his mate. Indeed these two made themselves so disagreeable that it seemed, not only to Gilmore himself, but also to his two fellow passengers, that they were seeking to find some means of quarrelling with him.

On the other hand, Captain Farley seemed especially anxious to make himself agreeable to the Hardings, and to them he never was more unpleasant than when he strove to be agreeable.

CHAPTER III. OUT ON THE GRAND OLD OCEAN.

WE left the "Euphemia" bearing down Channel with a strong south-east breeze. The English Channel in the month of December, at least as far as temperature is concerned, is not the most agreeable locality in the world; then came the Bay of Biscay with its tumultuous seas and adverse gales,

which did not contribute to the comfort and satisfaction of the passengers on board the good barque "Euphemia." But these annoyances and discomforts were now all past, and they were hoping that there would be no more of these sea horrors during the remainder of the voyage.

To Charles Gilmore and the Hardings it was a time of daily increasing happiness. The wind was fair, the sea was smooth, ahead was the vast Atlantic, above the glorious blue heavens. Day by day Charley had been growing in favour with these two amiable ladies. He was one of those who, if he applied for admittance to the inmost sympathies of the human heart, never failed to obtain an entrance. His grief for the loss of his father, his sorrow at his separation from his mother and sister, and his lonely position, together with the reciprocation of feeling and ideas, had made them far more intimate with him than many persons they had known for years. There were few subjects on which he could not converse; and on whatever subject he spoke, there was something more displayed than ordinary judgement.

Another bond of union was their mutual dislike and distrust of Captain Farley and his crew. Things were not going very smoothly on board the "Euphemia." The skipper was captious and ill-tempered, and the crew sullen and, at times, half inclined to be mutinous. Indeed, had it not been that they were afraid of Farley's violence, they would have secured him as a prisoner and offered the command to the mate. Had they done so they might have found that they had sprung out of the frying-pan into the fire.

It was at this time that an incident occurred which somewhat opened Gilmore's eyes as to the character of the skipper and his mate. One night as he lay in his berth, between sleeping and waking, he heard voices in the cabin, apparently in earnest conversation, and on listening found that the voices were those of the captain and the mate. Presently the former exclaimed in louder tones than usual:

"No, no, man! Who ever heard of a West Indiaman catching fire! At any rate I'm not going to try it. No, scuttling I started with, and scuttling I shall stick to."

"What about Mr. Gilmore?"

"That's the knotty point," replied the captain; "I must think about that. I shall have another tot and then turn in."

There was a pause, and then the mate asked:

"What about Ross, is he all right?"

"Yes, he's safe enough."

Again there was a pause, followed by the stumbling of feet up the companion ladder. Then while Gilmore lay cogitating on the conversation, there came several violent snorts as of a drunken man in his sleep, and eventually the sound of a heavy body falling on the deck. He rose and opened the door of his berth, and there in a confused heap lay the skipper, breathing heavily, and muttering:

"Empty casks, indeed! Hodgson's Pale Ale! I should say so, rather!"

Charles Gilmore returned to his berth, but sleep never again visited his eyes that night. He could not make out very clearly the nature of the danger which threatened him, but there was danger of some sort, he was perfectly convinced. At the same time he was also firmly persuaded that whatever the peril was, he, individually, was powerless to avert it.

The question he was debating with himself now was, should he tell his fellow-passengers what he had overheard? If he did, what good purpose could be served? At last he decided not to alarm the Hardings, but to keep his secret to himself.

CHAPTER IV. A PHANTOM ISLAND.

MORE than three weeks had passed, the trades had long since been reached, and the ship had been bowling away under a press of canvas at a good rate. But now, though the day was remarkably fine, the breeze was variable, at one time quite light, at another so strong that the studding-sails had to be taken in, and the royal and sky-sails had to be furled. Meantime the sky was serene and bright, but towards evening it became sultry and oppressive. The sea was as smooth as glass, not a breath of wind dimpled its surface.

Mrs. and Miss Harding were seated on the poop taking their tea. It was the second dog watch, and all hands were on deck when they were startled by a cry of "Land ho!"

"Land!" exclaimed the captain. "Nonsense! There's no land within a thousand miles of us; it's absurd!"

"Well," said Mr. Hicks, rubbing his eyes, "this beats me. I've heard of the 'Flying Dutchman' and the 'Phantom Ship,' but what's this?"

"That's more than I can tell," replied Captain Farley. "All I know is that I sailed these seas for thirty years, man and

boy, and have never heard or seen anything of land in these latitudes!"

"But, Captain Farley!" exclaimed Edith, "it's so plain, it must be land!"

"Perhaps we have fallen on a discovery!" suggested Gilmore. "Look at that headland, surely that cannot be an optical illusion?"

The captain made no answer, and he and the mate continued to walk the deck in silence. The breeze freshened, and at last scepticism gave place to conviction, and desirous of not running into danger, Captain Farley ordered the barque's course to be altered, and she bore away to the southward. She had scarcely come to the wind, and the yards had been trimmed, when the whole vanished, as it were, into the sea. Exclamations of astonishment burst from all hands while the captain said:

"I knew it could not be real, and yet I must confess I was so far deceived that I thought it best to give it a wide berth. Square away, Mr. Hicks, and get the stunsail on her again."

The barque had hardly resumed her course when a sudden calm fell upon them; and as in tropical latitudes there is scarcely any twilight, almost simultaneously with the setting of the sun darkness fell upon the sea.

The moon had not yet risen, and the sky was ablaze with millions of stars, shining out in all their glittering effulgence. We have no desire to depreciate the beauties of an English summer night; but the clearness and soft transparency of a tropical sky is something quite different. The English sky appears to be a solid plain, brilliantly studded with stars. In the tropics the great planets hang pendulous, like globes of liquid fire; you could, as it were, see above and beyond them. In short, they seemed swimming in the blue ether.

Then came the full-orbed moon, shedding her silvery light on the calm, glass-like sea.

"How strangely beautiful!" exclaimed Charles Gilmore. "What an expanse of glittering waters! What a stream of glorious light, forming, as it were, a path leading right up to the gates of heaven!"

"Yes," sighed Edith, "a night such as this seems like a foretaste of heaven!"

Captain Farley laughed, saying:

"I am afraid it is more likely to be a portent of a storm."

"I hope not, Captain Farley," said Mrs. Harding. "I think we had enough storms in the Channel and the Bay of Biscay to last for the whole of the voyage."

"Sufficient for the day, or rather of the night, is the beauty thereof," put in Gilmore; "let us not anticipate evil!"

"Philosophers may talk," sneered the captain, "but storms and gales pay no attention," and he turned on his heels and walked away.

"What a cross old thing!" whispered Edith; "I'm sure you said nothing offensive."

"And he said nothing but what is true," laughed Gilmore.

"Perhaps not; but it was the way in which it was said," replied Edith. "Why is he always trying to snub you?"

As she said this she raised her large, soft blue eyes to his, almost coquettishly, and he thought what beautiful eyes they were. She smiled and slightly coloured as he gazed down at her, and she gave him a glance which would have touched the heart of a less susceptible fellow than he was. How exquisitely lovely she looked as she sat there in the moonlight! There was something in the calm serenity of the scene, something in the hush and tranquillity of the night, which touched a tender chord in his heart. There was, too, something in her voice, so clear and soft, which caused him a curious throb of delight, and produced a sensation quite new to him.

"What are you thinking of?" she whispered.

"Thinking of, Miss Harding," he replied. "I am afraid you would be offended if I were to tell you."

"How tiresome you are; how can I tell unless I know what it was?"

"Then I was thinking how very beautiful you were!"

"It's the first time Mr. Gilmore has appeared in the character of a flatterer, and I don't think it becomes him."

"Truth is not flattery," he said sententiously.

Edith rose gracefully and made him a profound curtsy, and then, turning to her mother, said:

"Now, mamma, I think it is time for us to retire," and with a pleasant "good night," they both disappeared down the companion.

CHAPTER V. A BRIGHT VISION CLOUDED.

At this point a new vista opened in Charley Gilmore's life. He was a novice in love, and though the growth of his passion had been rapid, he had not realised its meaning. When his eyes first rested on

Edith Harding he was attracted by her beauty only ; but as time went on, and he found that virtue and excellence were joined to beauty, talent, and sweetness of temper, he experienced a sort of pleasure he had never known before, a thrill of satisfaction when he noticed the evident pleasure she took in his society and conversation.

It has been said that in love we idolise the object, and place it apart, looking upon it as superior to all others. In a certain sense this is true ; at any rate it was true as far as Charley Gilmore was concerned. But then Edith Harding was not only capable of feeling, but also of exciting deep and intense emotion, and although he had hitherto been considered rather a stolid and unemotional man, he, too, was capable of deep and ardent feeling, and in the depths of his heart there were the germs of strong passions. But like many other men of ardent and impassive nature, he was not easily excited ; but like the sea, when its waves are once aroused, they are not to be easily repressed. His acquaintance with Edith Harding, short as it was, had opened up new feelings and new emotions.

There was one great obstacle in the way. Were his pecuniary circumstances at the present time such as would warrant him in trying to win this girl's love ? His answer was No, and yet such was the fascination of her presence, and such was daily becoming the over-mastering nature of his passion, that he felt sure that if she gave him the least encouragement he should succumb to it and declare his love. But then if giving his heart and gaining hers were to produce misery to both, ought he not to restrain his voice, if he could not restrain his eyes ?

His position was a peculiar one. He could not fly from her, he could not escape the daily temptation of her presence. Again, Mrs Harding was kind-hearted and liberal-minded, and he felt that she would think more about her daughter's happiness than of his somewhat anomalous position ; but what chance was there of his gaining her father's consent ? But then came the voice of hope, suggesting that the estate might not be in so bad a state as the attorney had represented. Indeed, Mrs. Harding had thrown out some broad hints as to his honesty. But could he stake the tranquillity of his whole life, and the happiness of this sweet girl on so frail a structure ? The answer he gave to this question was again an emphatic No ! Such were the thoughts that agitated him as he paced

the poop deck the morning following the incidents related in the last chapter.

As far as the present aspect of the heavens was concerned, there was no prospect of the storm which Captain Farley had predicted.

That gentleman and Oliver Hicks, the mate, were pacing the deck, and at the same time carrying on an animated conversation. The mate seemed greatly excited, and the rubicundity of his face and nose was more observable than ever.

"I should very much like to know what those men are talking about," said Edith to her mother as she sat on a hen-coop and reclined against the mizzan rigging. "I don't know why it is, mamma," she continued, after a pause, "but they seem to be plotting."

"Nonsense, dear," replied Mrs. Harding ; "it's something about the latitude or longitude, or the dead-reckoning. Captains and mates are always disputing about such sort of things."

"I don't think so, because Mr. Hicks looks first at Mr. Gilmore and then at us, and then Captain Farley looks at Mr. Gilmore and seems to scowl."

"That's quite true ; but then he always seems to scowl at him. I never saw a man so altered."

"Altered ! I should think so ; why I believe he's half-drunk now ; and as to his cruelty to that poor cabin boy, it is shocking."

"True, dear, and I shall be very glad when the voyage is over," replied Mrs. Harding.

"So shall I," responded Edith, "for lately I have had a strange presentiment that it will not end without hurt and danger."

"Nonsense ! Presentiments ! I don't believe in them. Do you, Mr. Gilmore ?" said she, turning round to him.

"I'm not sure," he replied ; "there are so many strange things said on what seems to be unquestionable authority, with regard to omens and prognostications, that I am rather inclined to believe in them as a rule."

"Thank you," replied Edith, with a pretty smile and a sly upward glance ; "I thought you would agree with me."

"I should not care to disagree with you, Miss Harding, if I could help it ; but what is the nature of your presentiment ?" he asked.

"That this voyage will not end without some misfortune, or hurt, or danger to either the ship or passengers."

"I quite agree with you," he replied, "but my opinion is not derived from prescience, but from knowledge," and he related the conversation which he had overheard between the captain and the mate.

"Scuttled! what does that mean?" asked Mrs. Harding in a whisper.

"To cut a hole or holes in a vessel to make her sink."

"Good heavens!" cried Edith; "how dreadful! Can nothing be done?"

"Nothing!" he replied, "except to be careful not to let them know that we have any knowledge of their design."

"But they will want to save themselves; they surely would not leave us to perish?" said Mrs. Harding.

"That is a question I cannot answer, especially as regards yourselves," he answered quietly; "but I am afraid, unless Providence intervenes in some strange manner, my fate is sealed."

"But Mr. Gilmore," broke in Mrs. Harding, "is there no way of escape?"

"None that I can see, my dear lady," he replied "We are in their toils, and I fancy we shall not receive much mercy at the hands of these cruel scoundrels."

"Why did you not tell us of this before?" asked Edith.

"Because I did not want to excite you. Indeed, I should not have told you now but for your presentiment."

"I am very glad that you have opened our eyes to the danger by which we seem to be encompassed," said Mrs. Harding. "To have been sent into eternity without a word of warning would have been sad indeed."

"Suppose this dastardly deed is to be done, when do you think it will be perpetrated?" asked Edith.

"Not till we are nearer the land than we are now," replied Gilmore.

"Thank Heaven for that!" responded Mrs. Harding. "The time is short. Remember what the palmist saith, 'They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivereth them out of their distress.' If we do this He may deliver us."

"I'm sure He will," replied Edith. "He'll never let such villains escape, and leave us to perish! But," she continued, laying her hand softly on his shoulder, "why do you think your life is in more danger than ours?"

"Because they said nothing about you and your mother, they only discussed what was to be done with me."

CHAPTER VI. THE CLOUD GATHERS.

THREE days more passed, days of fair winds and tranquil seas. Since the conversation related in the last chapter, the mind of Edith had undergone some change. She was becoming fonder of grave thoughts; she was more pensive, and there was a softness and gentleness in her manner which was very winning, more so than it had been before. Gilmore's thoughts, too, had taken a higher turn; there was also in his manner towards her a gentleness and tenderness which told her that if she thought of him he also thought as constantly of her.

It was one of those beautiful nights which are only to be seen in tropical climes, and these two sat in the moonlight and conversed. They were quite alone, the man at the wheel was dozing, and the watch forward were doing a bit of caulking.

Charles Gilmore, as he cast furtive glances at the sweet face, at the graceful pose of the perfect figure, was seized with an insane longing to make her there and then his own; to pass his arm round her supple waist, to kiss those ruby lips, and pour into her ears the story of his love.

It was the sound of Edith's voice which aroused him from a reverie which was every moment becoming more dangerous to himself and the unconscious object of his passionate longing.

"Have you any idea," she asked, "how far we are from the land?"

"Captain Farley says we shall make it in three or four days, or a week," he replied.

"So soon," she murmured. "I should like this to last for ever!"

"So should I!"

Then there was a pause.

"Edith!" he said softly, "I may call you Edith, may I not, darling?"

She looked down and blushed, and answered "Yes."

The instant afterwards she was pressed to his bosom, and then

If Heaven a draught of pleasure sweet;
One touch of joy to fill our hearts,
'Tis when the lips of lovers meet,
And in each other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the silvery moon and the soft evening gale.

"Weren't you surprised to find I loved you?" he asked, when he had released her from his embrace.

"No," she replied, "I knew it from the first, that is I thought so, but I could not be sure."

"And did you love me from the first, dearest?"

"Yes," she murmured, and a bright blush suffused her cheeks and brow.

Gilmore smiled, and taking her hand kissed it fondly, saying:

"My darling, I thank Heaven for this happiness!"

At this moment there came a broad, bright, sudden flash of lightning, followed by a peal of distant thunder which died away with a mutter into the distance, and then all was silent.

"How grand!" exclaimed Edith.

"I think you had better go below, Miss Harding," said Captain Farley, who had just come on deck, approaching her side; "we are going to have some serious weather."

"Oh, Captain Farley, don't send me below, please; I never saw a storm at sea," answered Edith.

"As you please," he replied, "only you had better get your cloak. It looks queer to leeward!"

At this instant the silence was again interrupted; another flash of lightning, followed by quick, sharp crashes of thunder. After this there was a long dead pause, only broken by the voice of the captain ordering the watch to be called to shorten sail.

This was followed by a sleepy "Ay, ay, sir," but the mate's voice rang out sharp and clear: "Call the watch, and look alive and get the stunsails into the top."

Meantime the watch below came on deck, and the barque was divested of all but her two square topsails and forecourse.

The aspect of the heavens grew blacker and blacker to leeward, while the sky in the west was clear and bright, and the moon still shone with a silvery splendour rendered more brilliant by the dark clouds which came hurrying up from the east.

Suddenly, as if by the wave of a magician's wand, the sky and the whole surface of the ocean were enveloped in impenetrable darkness; then a vivid flash of lightning lit with a lurid glare the black expanse, and was followed by a deafening peal of thunder which seemed to burst open the floodgates of heaven, and the rain descended in torrents.

Flash after flash of lightning, and peal after peal of thunder, followed in rapid succession; but not a breath of wind stirred in the heavens, while in the intervals between the thunder a low, hoarse, rumbling sound came from the eastward.

The crew had just sent down the royal and top-gallant yards and housed the masts,

and had commenced to haul out the reef tackles preparatory to reefing the topsails, when the gale suddenly swooped down upon them like a thunderbolt, and the "Euphemia" like a stricken deer flew before the wild and impetuous gale.

All around was as dark as pitch, except when the lightning lit up the scene and made it the more appalling. There were no mountainous billows, for a sea no sooner raised its head than it was cut off and blown onward in a sheet of spray. The ocean seemed cowed and beaten down, and when the lightning illuminated the sea the vessel seemed floating in an ocean of foam.

During all this Charles Gilmore and Edith Harding stood awestruck and fascinated. The grand phenomenon which was taking place before them was more sublime and magnificent than anything they had before witnessed, and their hearts were filled with reverence at this wonderful exhibition of the Creator's power.

CHAPTER VII. SHIPWRECKED.

Two days passed. The easterly gale, though somewhat modified in its force, still continued, and the "Euphemia," under close-reefed topsails and forecourse, was speeding on to her destination.

During this time the conduct of Captain Farley had been materially altered, much to the astonishment of the crew. The small stores had been supplied with a liberality unknown before, and, apart from the ordinary occasions, "Grog ho!" had been called in the dog-watches, while his amiability to all was remarkable.

On the third night it was the captain's watch, and, contrary to his usual custom, he remained on deck during the whole of it. Shortly before midnight he was pacing the deck in an excited way, when he hailed the forecabin, calling on the watch to keep a good look-out.

Eight bells had been struck, the watch had been called, and the men were slowly coming up from below, and those who had been keeping watch were anticipating a comfortable four hours' snooze when:

"Breakers ahead!" was shouted by the look-out, and all was confusion.

"Starboard!" shouted the captain, "hard a-starboard."

"Starboard it is, sir," answered the steersman.

The barque, as she rose on the mighty sea, gave a sheer to port, and when she reached the crest she seemed to hang back,

as if making an effort to escape her doom, and then descended on to a reef with a crash which made the whole fabric tremble.

All was confusion on board.

"Get out the long-boat!" shouted the captain.

This was done, and the men were hurried into it before they could regain their scattered senses, the painter was cast off, and the boat, under a close-reefed lug, with its living freight, sped forward on the crest of a sea. At this moment there came a break in the clouds, and a gleam of moon-light fell upon the boat.

"Where's Mr. Gilmore and the ladies?" cried a voice.

"Hang Mr. Gilmore and the ladies!" cried Farley "We've got to save our own lives."

"And leave Mr. Gilmore and the ladies to perish? No, no, my lads! Dowse the lug and let us pull back to the ship."

A general shout proclaimed the acquiescence of the men in this suggestion, and the sail was lowered. They were in the trough of a great sea, and as the boat rose on the following billow, the crest curled over and burst on to the boat. This was followed by cries and shrieks, and then all was silent, save for the howling of the wind and the roaring of the billows.

Charles Gilmore was fast asleep in his bunk when the vessel struck on the reef, and was suddenly awakened by the shock. He started up and hurriedly dressed himself, and was about to rush on deck, when to his surprise and consternation, he found that the door was fastened on the outside. The whole horror of his position flashed on him at once. He was a prisoner, and his violent efforts to break open the door were ineffectual. On deck there was the noise of tramping of feet, the confusion of many voices, and the sea breaking over the vessel with terrific violence. All these sounds told him that the danger was imminent, even if escape were possible. He was possessed of more than ordinary strength, and at last succeeded in breaking open the door. The noise on deck had ceased, but to his horror and consternation, there came shrieks and cries from the ladies' cabins, and he knew that Edith and her mother were in the same peril as himself. Mad-dened by the idea of such treachery on the part of Farley, he sprang out on to the quarter-deck just in time to perceive that the ship was deserted, and to see the long-boat disappear in the gloom.

At this moment a great billow came roaring across the reef, and broke over the barque. Gilmore seized hold of a backstay and clung to it like grim death. The water hissed and gurgled in his ears, and he seemed on the point of suffocation; but as he thought he must give in and let go, the water left him, and he gasped for breath.

More dead than alive he descended to the ladies' cabin, and, after much exertion, forced open the door of their berth and released them.

"Oh, Mr. Gilmore, what shall we do?" asked Mrs. Harding. "Has this happened by accident, or is it treachery?"

"Treachery, no doubt, my dear lady," he answered; "or why were we imprisoned in our cabins?"

Just at this moment the barque was lifted on a monstrous wave, carried some distance on its crest, and then came down with a crash which made every timber in her crack and tremble, and at the same time a deluge of water came pouring down the hatchway.

A few moments passed before they could regain their scattered senses, and then Edith threw herself into Gilmore's arms, crying:

"Charley, dear, is there any hope?"

"None, I am afraid, dearest," he replied. "Abandoned by all but God, it is He alone who can help us."

"And He will," replied Mrs. Harding. "He is just and good, and will not allow the machinations of these villains to prosper."

The poor "Euphemia" at this moment was again lifted from the rocks and carried forward on a huge billow; but this time she did not strike the reef, but had passed over it, and was, in short, afloat in deep water.

Under the influence of a strong flood-tide and these vast Atlantic billows, the vessel had been carried over the reef, and was now, so far, in comparative safety.

"I wonder," said Gilmore, when they had made their way on to the deck, "whether those villains have carried out their intentions and scuttled her?"

"In that case, I suppose, our fate is sealed?" suggested Mrs. Harding.

"I am afraid so."

"Hark!" cried Edith, a short time afterward. "I hear the wash of water in the cabin!"

Gilmore descended the ladder and found at least twenty-four inches of water, and his heart sank within him.

Their doom was sealed. It was only a question of time.

The Falmouth packet "Eclipse," commanded by Lieutenant Grimwood of the Royal Navy—one of those mariners who in times of peace prefer the purgatory of the packet service to the comparative paradise of a comfortable cottage in Kent or Sussex on half-pay—was lying almost motionless on a calm sea. It was the twenty-fourth day of her voyage, and the passengers and crew were in a state of excitement, as the captain had stated that he expected to sight the land that afternoon, and that land was the sunny isles of the Columbian Archipelago.

The untravelled reader knows nothing of the excitement a man feels when, after seeing sea and sky and sky and sea for nearly a month, he first sights the kindly land beckoning to him from over the salt waves. This may be said of any land; but how much more so if that land be tropical!

Yes, the captain's prophecy had come true, and Carlisle Bay, with its fleet of merchantmen, was now just discernible in the distance. It was a beautiful scene in itself, but thrice beautiful to the weary voyager, who deeply feels that the land was made for him.

But at this moment the attention of everybody was directed in a very different quarter. Something had been sighted, but no one could make out what it was.

"I think it's a derelict, and water-logged," said Mr. Northcote, the mate.

"Yes," said a military-looking gentleman, "she is very low in the water, and the mystery is why she does not sink."

"Perhaps she's mahogany-laden, and has come to grief in the last gale," suggested one of the passengers.

"Mahogany-laden! Nonsense!" exclaimed the captain. "If so, what would she be doing in these seas?"

For some seconds the captain concentrated his gaze on the distant object, and then, lowering his glass, said:

"Take a pull of the port brace, Mr. Northcote, and let her come to the wind; we must have a closer look at her, there may be some one alive on board. How's her head now?" asked the captain.

"About north-west, sir."

"Keep her so!"

The shades of evening are falling on the almost placid water of that deep blue sea. The western sky is aflame with the glory of a tropical sunset.

As the "Eclipse" stole along through that soft and shadowy sea, the excitement

grew more intense, for it was reported that a flag had been hoisted, indicating that there was some one alive on the derelict.

"I have it!" exclaimed Mr. Northcote, slapping his thigh with satisfaction. "She's the 'Euphemia'! Don't you remember, sir?" he said, addressing himself to the captain. "There was a paragraph about her in the newspaper. A man met with an accident and died; but before he died he confessed that the barque was sent out to be wrecked. That they had put on board of her a large quantity of barrels of water, and entered them at the Custom House and insured them as Hodgson's Pale Ale and Read's Stout. The water was to be started as soon as they got clear of the Channel, and the ship was to be scuttled as soon as they made the land. The fools didn't think that these empty casks would keep the vessel afloat spite of their scuttling."

"I believe you are right, Northcote," replied the captain. "I remember reading the paragraph myself."

CHAPTER VIII. RESCUED.

THREE gaunt figures were standing on the deck of the "Euphemia" watching the approach of the "Eclipse." They had been drifting about for many days, how many they did not know, for they had lost all count of time. More than a week had passed. A strange sort of languor had been creeping over them. For many days they had not tasted food, and their strength had begun to forsake them. All hope of rescue had left them; day after day they sat staring out over the sea, in a state of hopeless despondency. But help was sent at last. Suddenly Gilmore uttered a cry, and stretching out his hand to the sea, exclaimed almost inarticulately:

"We are saved! See! here is a vessel close upon us!"

Edith jumped up with a cry of thankfulness, her heart beating wildly at the delightful sight, and clasping her mother in her arms they both shed tears of joy.

But now their transports had somewhat subsided, and they stood there watching the noble vessel which was bearing down to their rescue. Half an hour afterwards a boat came alongside, and in a few minutes the shipwrecked sufferers were conveyed on board the packet, where they met with the kindness and assistance which was necessary in their exhausted state.

Tripping daintily down one of the broad

streets that lead from the beautiful Protestant Church of Port of Spain, the capital of the Island of Trinidad, was a coloured lady of some pretensions to beauty, draped in a gay and varied costume, which only a quadroon or a Spaniard could do justice to. She was carrying a parasol of considerable dimensions, and with the front of her dress slightly elevated, showing a pair of small feet and well-shaped ankles.

"Good morning, Miss Nancy!" exclaimed a gentleman in naval costume, with only one swab on his shoulder, who was coming in the opposite direction. "Where have you been to at this early hour of the day?"

"I hab bin out to take de air, sa!" she replied with dignity.

"Yes, but you don't generally do so, so early."

"No, sa," she replied with a benignant smile, "but dis marning I hab bin to de weddin'!"

"Wedding! Whose wedding?"

"Miss Edith Harding, sa."

"And who is the lucky man?"

"Mr. Gilmore, sa, de handsome buckra gentleman as saved her and her modder when de ship was scuttled."

AN UNCONVENTIONAL COURTSHIP.

By LUCIE WALKER.

THE sunshine of a June evening falls soft and rich across the broad front of a substantial-looking red-brick farmhouse, with many gables and mullioned windows, and a deep porch sheltering its iron-clamped front door. Before the house spreads an old-fashioned flower-garden, in the formal box-edged borders of which grow all kinds of time-honoured posies: roses and sunflowers, sweet-williams and daffodils, lupins and larkspurs, pansies and London pride. In the shadow of the porch sits a burly, ruddy-faced farmer smoking his evening pipe, and along the white gravel walks, between the rows of flowers, an elderly woman and a young girl are walking to and fro, pausing every now and then in their walk, but never in their talk, sometimes even speaking both at once, so much they have to say to one another after three long years of separation.

"And you really ain't tired, my dearie, after your travelling!" says the elder woman fondly, "and that noisy, shaky train hasn't made your pretty head ache;

because if it has you've only got to say so, and you shall go in and go to bed at once. We've got to-morrow and plenty more to-morrows after that to do our talking."

"I'm not a bit tired, Ruth; it really isn't such a very long journey from London, and your lovely tea has quite freshened me up. Besides, I can't wait till to-morrow, I must talk to-night. I can scarcely believe I am here, you know. I had such trouble to persuade father to let me come. Aunt Mary and Aunt Kate were so set against it."

"I know all that without any telling, dearie," said Ruth, nodding her head sagaciously. "I can make a pretty good guess at what they said—how it wasn't fitting that a pretty young lady like you should come and stay with her old nurse in a plain farmhouse, where there's no fine company—and p'raps they wasn't altogether wrong, Miss Elsie, dear, for I misdoubt me, you'll be sadly dull here when we've said our say to one another. You won't want to stay long at Birchetta."

"Shan't I," was the rejoinder; "well, you'll see. I'm going to learn to churn, and to make cheese, and to make hay, and all kinds of things, and that'll take a long time; in fact, I mean to stay all the time father is in California. You know, he has taken an immense contract for some new docks, and he has gone to start the works himself. He'll be away at least three months."

Ruth shook her head.

"The aunts won't let you stay with me as long as that, Miss Elsie," she said.

"The aunts!" repeated Elsie contemptuously; "it's no business of theirs where I am. Anyhow, they don't want me. Their idea was that father should send me to school while he was away—send me to school, Ruth, think of that."

"Well, I never," cried Ruth indignantly, "and you turned eighteen, and taken to long dresses. And what was you to do at school?"

"I was to get a few finishing touches to my education, which is very imperfect," replied the girl demurely, "and I was to be kept in order."

"Ah, yes," went on Ruth, "it's the old story. They called you spoilt and wilful, and maybe you are a bit of both, and p'raps they blamed me for it, and they weren't altogether wrong there neither. But I'd like to know how it could have been otherwise. There was you, a little motherless bairn; and there was master rushing

about, money-making in all directions with his docks and railways, and his bridges and what not, and scarce a thought for you, though he'd no one but you to earn and save for, and no one but poor old Ruth to look after you. Then one 'ud come and another 'ud come and say, 'Ruth, you're spoiling that child, till no one can't do nothink with her,' but they was glad all the same to leave the worry of you to me; and now you've growed up they think I'm not good enough for you; but you ain't that sort, my bairnie; you won't forget me for them as don't care half so much for you." Then she paused for want of breath.

"Of course I won't," replied the girl caressingly; "you know I always do as I like in the end. Father makes a fuss, but I get my own way. I meant to come and stay with you, and here I am till father comes back."

"And so master's got another big contract," began Ruth again after a pause, "another big job of money-making. And to think as I mind him, a poor, struggling young fellow on Rayles and Lyne's works, and when he wanted to marry your poor dear ma, her father was loath for her to make such a poor match. And now he's that rich that he don't know what he's got, and they've made a baronet of him, and he's Sir Mark Newton. La, Miss Elsie, there's a deal to wonder at in the way things turn out."

"So there is, Ruth," said the girl, laughing. "For instance, I can remember a time when you used to say you wouldn't marry the best man in the world, and here you are with a good husband and the loveliest home of your own any one ever saw."

"I've stuck to what I said, all the same," said Ruth, with a patronising look towards the broad-shouldered farmer in the porch. "Cummings is all very well, and I've nothing against him, but I haven't married the best man in the world. I hope he's still looking out for a wife and that you'll get him. And as to the loveliness of the house, that's according to taste; to my mind it's a deal too big for a farmhouse, which it never was meant for."

"And what was it meant for?" asked Elsie.

"It was meant for gentryfolk. It used to be Carnbury Dower House, where the Dowager Lady Carnburys used to spend their widowhood if they were so minded; see, there's the Carnbury coat-of-arms on the porch and in the middle gable."

"And who are the Carnburys?" asked Elsie, as she stood to look at the escutcheon, which time had worn to indistinctness.

"Why, missis," said Robert Cummings, taking his pipe from his mouth, "hain't you never told her about the family, and you born and brought up at their gates?"

"Nay," said Ruth, "why should I ha' told about them? There's not much good I could ha' told."

"There's no good scarcely," replied her husband composedly, "and there's pretty well o' bad. Still, they're the oldest gentry in the county, and Carnbury Place is the finest place in the Midlands. See, missy," he went on, getting up and pointing across the garden, "see that long line of trees on the ridge—that's the avenue, it's two miles long; the gates are close by here, but the house is on the other side of the ridge. A grand place it is, or rather was, in the good old days, that'll never come back any more."

"When was that," asked Elsie, "and why won't they come back?"

"That was when I was a youngster, before the big troubles came—though even then the place was mortgaged up to the very weather-cock on the tower. However, they kept it all up in the good old style till old Lord Carnbury died, and Mr. Nowell came to be master. Then it was all up with everything."

"Why, what did he do?"

"What did he do," repeated Cummings, "well, I don't exactly know what he didn't do. The Carnburys had always been wild and reckless, but for wildness and recklessness he went beyond all his forebears. For a year or two there was such goings on at Carnbury Place as had never been heard of, and then all of a sudden his lordship shut up the house and went away, to live on the cheap, I expect, mostly in furrin' parts."

"And has he never come back again?"

"I believe he comes now and again just to see Mr. Smedley, the agent, but no one knows when he comes or when he goes, and no one cares either, for he's no sort of a landlord to his tenants, and all the gentry have turned their backs upon him."

"That's rather shabby of them," said Elsie chivalrously, "now that he is ruined."

"No, it isn't, missy. You see, his lordship's done things that no gentleman can do and look the world in the face afterwards."

"Come, master," said Ruth, "your pipe'll go out if you chatter like that."

"Then I'll light it up again," rejoined Robert Cummings composedly; "if every-

thing could be set to rights as easy as a pipe that's gone out it 'ud be a good thing for such as his lordship. But money and credit and a good name that you've lost are harder to lay hands on than a box o' matches."

"But why doesn't he sell the place?" asked Elsie, "if he doesn't live in it, and has no money to keep it up."

"He have tried to sell it, miss, but it isn't easy to find a purchaser for a great place like Carnbury, and his lordship isn't an easy man to do business with either. We heard once that some London gent, whose name didn't come out, was near buying it, but there was a hitch of some sort, and he cried off."

"Or," suggested Elsie, "he might marry a lady with a large fortune."

"He's had a try to do that, too," replied Robert; "in fact there ain't many ways of slipping his neck out of the noose that he hasn't tried. But the Lord keep any good woman from throwing in her lot with his."

"There, there, Cummings," said his wife, "that's enough, and more than enough, about things that are best let alone. You come along with me, Miss Elsie, and we'll feed the chickens and shut up the hen-house."

"You tiresome old Ruth," said Elsie. "Why do you object to my hearing all about Lord Carnbury? I rather like a bit of scandal, especially when it's about a real live lord. I should like to see this wicked aristocrat."

"You wouldn't get much good of seeing him, dearie; and I'm glad there's no chance you will."

"I suppose," went on the girl, "I suppose you think he would snatch me up, and run away with me, and marry me because I have a fortune. Wouldn't you like me to marry a real live lord, Ruth?"

"I'd like you to marry an honest man, dearie. And I'll give Robert a good scolding for being the one to start this nonsense. He's got no gumption. And now let's drop his lordship and talk of something better, which is easy enough, only while I'm counting the chickens we'd better not talk at all."

Ruth Cummings was not very far wrong when she surmised the possibility of Birchetts proving in the long run a dull abode for her former nursling. Elsie's enthusiasm for the domestic pursuits of a farmhouse cooled down after two or three bouts of churning and cheesemaking, the

charm of looking for new-laid eggs in the treacherous dimness of stables and cow-byres wore off, and when she had blistered her hands and freckled her face in the hay-field she began to feel, if not to confess, that she had exhausted the resources of rural life. Never before in the eighteen years of her experience had the days seemed so long and so terribly slow-footed. There were no little excitements to look forward to or to look back upon. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, within reach which one could possibly get excited about. Elsie did not relish monotony. She had no wish that succeeding days should resemble one another. She wondered if the Dowager Lady Carnburys of auld lang syne had ever found the solitude of the Dower House oppressive. Probably they had; but then in those days the big house which now lay deserted behind that long dark line of trees was full of life, and the Dowagers were not totally without distraction. She almost wondered that Ruth had not proposed, considering how scanty the amusements of the farm were, to take her to see Carnbury Place. But so far from proposing it, Ruth had gently put aside the suggestion when Elsie had made it. Why should she put it aside? It was stupid not to make the most of the only noteworthy thing in the neighbourhood, and if Ruth would not take her she would go by herself.

It was not without ground that Miss Newton's aunts called her self-willed. The girl inherited from her father all the tenacity of purpose which had raised him to a foremost position among modern engineers, and she was proud of her inherited characteristic. So one day when Robert Cummings was absent at a neighbouring cattle fair, and while Ruth was engrossed by a heavy wash, Elsie started forth on her voyage of discovery.

At the end of the avenue nearest to Birchetts the lodge was empty; the stately carriage gates looked as if they had not been used for years; the side wicket, through which she passed, swung to and fro without a latch on rusty hinges. Along the neglected drive grass and weeds grew thick, trees lay uprooted here and there on the turf; the broad sheet of water which lay embosomed among groups of beech and elm was choked with water-weed; while in the distance the great stone mansion had the forlorn and deserted air of a house which has stood long uninhabited. There was no one in sight—no one to let or hinder—and Elsie walked boldly on, now and then lingering a little to deplore the desolation

that lay over everything, until at last she found herself at the main entrance of Carnbury Place. For a few minutes she stood looking at the arched gateway in the square tower, with the Carnbury coat-of-arms above it. Then she took her courage in both hands, and went through it into a great quadrangle, where dandelions and daisies blossomed freely between the broken paving-stones, and the untrimmed creepers hung in untidy luxuriance over the heavy stonework. An open window and a big mastiff chained near the gateway were the only signs of life, until, at the furious barking of the dog, a side-door opened and the withered face of an old woman peered cautiously out at the intruder.

"Good morning," said Elsie affably; "are you the housekeeper here?"

"It don't much matter who I am," replied the woman ungraciously, "the question is who are you and what's your business?"

"My name is Newton," answered the girl, in nowise rebuffed; "perhaps you have heard of my father, Sir Mark Newton."

"No, I never have," was the answer; "but supposin' I had, what then?"

"Well, perhaps," replied Elsie insinuatingly, "if you were quite convinced of my respectability, you might show me the inside of the house; I should like to see it so very much. I am staying with my old nurse, Mrs. Cummings, at Birchetts," she added by way of appendix.

"Then Mrs. Cummings might ha' told you that Carnbury ain't a show place, and that if trespassers are caught they'll be prosecuted."

Then the door was shut unceremoniously, and the mastiff, who had held his peace as long as the old woman was visible, broke out into fresh vociferations.

"Be quiet, you disagreeable brute," cried Elsie energetically, "don't bully unoffending people. I've a great mind to climb in at that open window and march all over the house, just to show you and that rude old woman how little I care for you," and she shook her parasol vindictively at the dog.

"If you will allow me," said a voice at her elbow, "I will find you a more convenient way of entering, and will undertake to show you more of the house than you could see for yourself in a burglarious voyage of discovery."

Elsie had turned with a start at the first words, to see a tall, well-dressed man standing bare-headed beside her. He was not very young, and was rather plain than

handsome, but there was an air of distinction about him and a tone in his voice which impressed Elsie as something quite superior. His clothes, too, were remarkably well-cut, and he wore a signet-ring, which even to the most inexperienced eye suggested a certain amount of dignity in the wearer. Elsie observed all this even in the surprise of her first glance, and as she was a young person who drew conclusions with great rapidity and decision, she was not long in identifying her interlocutor to her own satisfaction. This was, of course—who else could it be?—the bankrupt owner of Carnbury on one of his mysterious visits to his ancestral home.

"I must tell you," he continued, as if in contradiction of her unspoken thought, "that my name is Nowell—Gilbert Nowell. I am staying here for a few days on a matter of business, and as I was sitting writing by yonder open window, I heard your conversation with Mrs. Cartwright, as well as your remarks to Bruno. Your father's name is more familiar to me than it seemed to her, so I thought I had better come to the rescue."

"Thank you," said Elsie, her spirits rising with the piquancy of the situation, "that quite restores my wounded self-respect. I felt immensely snubbed when that uncivil old person jumped on my credentials. One doesn't like being snubbed in the person of one's father."

"Certainly not," replied her companion, "especially when one's father is a well-known public character. I, however, know a little of him privately, I heard a good deal about him; in fact, I once saw him, at the time he was thinking of buying this place."

Elsie lifted an astonished look to her companion's face.

"My father!" she exclaimed, "thinking of buying Carnbury! And I never knew anything of it. How like him. He's the very closest person you ever met with. Why, he must be the 'London gent' Robert Cummings told me about, whose name he didn't know. And I actually came here out of pure boredom, because there was nothing to do at Birchetts, and see what an interesting bit of news I have come across."

Mr. Nowell smiled.

"One might almost quote the well-worn illustration of Saul and his father's asses," he said.

"Hardly," said Elsie. "I have only come upon a kingdom I have been baulked of. Dear me," she added, looking round

the quadrangle and then bringing her gaze slowly back to her companion, "this makes me doubly indignant. You know, ever since I heard about Carnbury Place—when I came to stay at Birchetts, that is—I have been thinking what a shame it is that such a place should stand empty and go to ruin because the owner of it is such a bad man."

Then she stopped to see the effect of her attack, but Mr. Nowell only smiled.

"Such a bad man," he repeated. "May I ask if you know Lord Carnbury?"

"No, I do not," replied Elsie very emphatically—after all, if he pretended not to be the owner of Carnbury she need not spare her strictures—"I do not know him, and I do not wish to. But I have heard dreadful things about him, and I know he is a bad man."

"Poor Carnbury," was the answer, "you are very hard on him."

"You don't mean to say you defend him?" said Elsie.

"Well, of course, I stick up for an absent friend, and besides, I think you only know part of his story."

"I certainly don't know it all," replied Elsie severely, "but I believe that the part I do not know is worse than what has been told me. Besides," she continued judicially, "I belong to a class which cannot be expected to have much sympathy with—"

"With a depraved aristocrat," suggested Mr. Nowell good-humouredly, as she hesitated.

"Exactly so," she answered. "You see, my father is a hard-working man; he has done all sorts of useful things in the world, and I think—I think, to put it quite plainly, that I rather despise such people as Lord Carnbury."

"Poor Carnbury," said Mr. Nowell again, and this time there was a suspicion of amusement in his tone. "Can't I persuade you to be a little more merciful to an unfortunate man?"

"It makes no difference to Lord Carnbury," replied Elsie, "whether I am merciful to him or not. He has spoilt his own life and done no good to other people, and all the pity I can waste on him will not mend the matter."

"I see," said her companion, "you are only sorry for misfortunes which can be pulled straight again. Now, I think that what cannot be righted is infinitely more pitiful and pitiable. Now shall we go and look at the house which you have just

discovered might possibly have passed out of Lord Carnbury's hands into your own?"

He led the way as he spoke through the door by which he had come out, and along a dusky corridor.

"This," he said, throwing open a heavy door at the end of it, "is the great hall. I won't inflict on you the names and dates of the august folks whose coats-of-arms are painted on the windows, and whose portraits look down from the walls; they probably would not appeal to your sympathy. But I think you will agree with me that as an entrance hall it is exceptionally fine. Look at the staircase. It is Italian marble, and the balustrades are Venetian iron-work. Look at the ceiling; it is by Grinling Gibbons. Look at the bay of that window; Queen Anne is said to have admired it. Above all I cannot tell how very jolly it used to be here on a winter evening when that huge fireplace was full of logs, and we sat round and talked nonsense between tea and dinner."

"Were you very frequently one of the party?" asked Elsie.

"Yes," was the answer, "more often than not when there was a party. Carnbury and I were at Eton together. I was his fag."

"Was he good or bad in those days?" continued Elsie with a spice of malice.

"I wasn't overburdened with discrimination in those days, I dare say," was the reply, "and so my opinion doesn't count. Now shall we look at the dining-room? It is quite as imposing as the hall."

From the dining-room he led her to the music-room, from the music-room to the picture gallery, and along the picture gallery to the ball-room.

"I think," said Miss Newton with great decision, as she looked at the broad stretch of irreproachable parquet, "I think father made a great mistake not to buy this place. Fancy the house-warming, with a ball-room like this. It is a perfect crime that such a floor should not be danced on."

"We will put that at the head of Carnbury's transgressions," interpolated Mr. Nowell.

"And moreover," continued Elsie, "I shall insist on his reconsidering his decision. I shall write to him at once. He is in California, you know; he has gone there on business for a short time. If the hitch were merely a question of price, perhaps it can be smoothed over now, because this new contract is to be something specially good. I suppose," she added, "that Lord

Carnbury would even be glad to make some concessions too?"

"I have no doubt he would," replied Mr. Nowell, "for he wants to sell it very much."

While they talked they had walked towards a window which looked out into the park. A dog-cart was coming up the drive, in which sat a grey-whiskered, lawyer-like looking man.

"Ah," said Elsie's guide, taking out his watch, "it is actually twelve o'clock, and there comes Smedley. I have an appointment with him, and I fear his time is too precious to waste, though mine is entirely at your disposal whenever you would like to see the rest of the house. There is the haunted chamber, and the chapel, and the royal suite, and other matters of interest which I should like to show you."

"Thank you," said Elsie demurely, "I think I will take the rest for granted. Good morning, Mr. Nowell. I am much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken."

He stood for a few moments where she had left him, looking after her retreating figure.

"How altogether delightfully fresh and original," he said to himself. "I hope she will not take all the rest for granted. And now for Smedley, who will be decidedly less amusing."

Elsie walked across the quadrangle and under the gateway in the tower, feeling that her morning's expedition had been a success. Outside all looked as quiet and forsaken as it had looked an hour before, but the sense of desolation no longer oppressed her as it had done. She was feeling so cheerful and elated that she could have clapped her hands and sung.

The sheen on the lake and the shadows of the trees looked more tempting than before, and turning her steps across the grass she went and sat down by the water to think matters quietly over.

It was quite the most interesting adventure she had ever had, and it had befallen her just when she had begun to find her surroundings unbearably tame and flat. She was almost grateful to Mr. Nowell for appearing so unexpectedly, and for making a little mystery about himself. How astonished he would be if he could guess that she had seen through his disguise; but really it was too poor a screen for his identity to call himself Nowell, too, which she remembered

was the Carnbury family name! Then she recalled with great satisfaction the home truths which she had had so capital an opportunity of telling him. It was rather irritating, however, that he had not even winced; he must be quite void of all sense of shame if, after having spoilt his inheritance and disgraced his name, he could talk so frivolously about himself in the third person.

Then she wondered what Ruth would say to it all. In the first place she would probably be rather cross. Ruth could be cross when she considered it necessary, and Elsie felt that the present occasion was one which would meet with her disapproval. How should she put it to her? Should she say, "Ruth, I have been at Carnbury, and I have seen Lord Carnbury, only he pretended to be some one else"? Or should she give it her in so many guesses? Perhaps she had better leave it to the inspiration of the moment. Making up speeches beforehand was a rather futile proceeding. Besides, her meeting with Lord Carnbury was only part of her morning's adventure. There was the interesting discovery she had made that the "London gent" of Robert's gossip and her father were one and the same person; and there was her own sudden idea—her determination she might call it—that the bargain which had been broken off should be renewed and completed. That would indeed be a surprise for her old nurse. That offered an unlimited vista for castle-building, and would be an unending topic of conversation. What plans they would make for the future! Then Elsie smiled to herself. It would be far better fun not to tell Ruth a word about it until it was all signed, sealed, and settled. The castle-building and planning would be more satisfactory then. She would not even mention how she had spent her morning, but she would write to her father that very afternoon. And then she got up and walked briskly down the avenue, feeling very much pleased with herself and the ultimatum she had come to.

"I see Mr. Smedley drive past this morning, master," said Ruth Cummings that evening to her husband. "I wished you'd ha' been there to tackle him about the roof of the barn; he's never taken no notice of your letter."

"He wouldn't take much notice of my speaking either, I reckon," was Robert's reply. "It ain't much good asking about repairs if what I heard to-day in Wellington is true. They say his lordship's got to

go through the Bankruptcy Court. It seems he'd got a horse in for the Derby, and he'd got thousands on it; and the day before yesterday the animal died sudden like in the stable. And now his creditors have made up their minds they must get what they can out of him."

"Deary me," said Ruth, "they won't get much, I reckon."

"Not unless he could manage to sell Carnbury," replied Robert. "However, he's made his own bed, and now he's got to lie on it as best he can."

Elsie recalled the calm good-humour of her guide. The discomfort of the bed he had made for himself did not appear to try him very grievously.

"What is Lord Carnbury like to look at?" she asked abruptly. "Does he look like a bad man?"

"I scarce know what he's like," said Ruth. "I've scarce seen him since he was a boy. He was no beauty then, but——"

"He's no beauty now," said Robert. "I see him last when old Lord Carnbury was buried four years ago. And what he chiefly looks like is a man that cares for no one and nothing in this world or the next."

This was certainly not a very explicit description, but it did not in any way contradict Elsie's impression of her acquaintance of the morning; moreover, the story Robert had brought home from Wellington explained the whole situation quite clearly. Lord Carnbury had obviously come home to wind up his tangled affairs. Mr. Smedley had been summoned as a matter of course. The oddest part of it all was that she herself should have appeared on the scene, and have declared her intention of becoming the mistress of Carnbury. What a solution to a complicated problem! Lord Carnbury did not deserve such a stroke of luck; he would probably make some unworthy use of it. That, however, was no concern of hers; she would probably never see him again, for, of course, she would carefully avoid Carnbury as long as he stayed there. Robert had said that he never stayed more than two or three days. This was Thursday. She would wait till Monday, and then she would feel safe in making a great voyage of discovery in the park. When she had settled this to her own satisfaction she wrote her letter to her father, and having posted it, she began to look on herself as fairly on the way to becoming the direct successor of the vanished Lady Carnburys.

"I was thinking last week that you was getting quite dull and mopy, dearie," said

Ruth, about ten days later, "but you've brightened up again wonderful. You look as merry and fresh as heart can wish, though you've nothing to amuse you, and no one to talk to you but your poor old Ruth."

At which Elsie blushed and felt a little uncomfortable, but made no answer. She had kept her secret diligently, and there was much more of it now than when she had first decided it should be a secret.

"Nothing to amuse her, and no one to talk to." If Ruth knew all about that, instead of commending her for cheery contentment, she would probably lecture her soundly for indiscretion. Yet Elsie was sure she had not been indiscreet. She had waited most discreetly till Monday—till Tuesday even—before she had paid a further visit to the domain she was so anxious to inspect, and then after roaming for a time about the wooded park, she had sat down beside the lake, and had given her mind to the weighty matter of a new boathouse, which would have to be considerably more picturesque than the awkward construction which time and neglect were making still more unsightly.

"And we will have some swans on the water," she said aloud, when she had thought out the architecture of the boathouse, "some black swans, and they shall have their nests on that dear little island covered with rhododendrons."

"Good morning, Miss Newton," said Mr. Nowell's voice suddenly behind her; "I thought I saw you from the terrace. Have you been for a walk in the woods?"

Elsie rose abruptly from her seat, her face clouded over partly with embarrassment and partly with annoyance.

"I thought you had gone away," she said, without returning his greeting.

"I do not know why you should have thought so," he replied, smiling; "I did not say I was going, surely."

"You did not say you were staying either," said Elsie, "and I certainly should not have come marching about the park in this free-and-easy manner if I had thought you were here."

"I hope," he rejoined courteously, "that my being here—and I may be here some little time—will be no check on your walking about as freely and easily as you choose. Indeed, I have been hoping for another glimpse of you. Perhaps I should not have seen you this morning if I had not been looking out for you. Do you know I discovered yesterday that the strawberries are

getting ripe! The beds are fearfully neglected, but the fruit is quite worth eating. Shall we make a raid upon them?"

"I think not, thank you," said Elsie stiffly.

He looked at her with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes.

"Don't you like strawberries?" he asked.

"I must say people who dislike strawberries are a living marvel to me."

"I don't dislike them," said Elsie frankly, "but I would rather not go into the garden, thank you."

Then she felt she had been as discreet as any one could desire an unchaperoned young woman to be.

"Won't you sit down again, then?" he said; "I am sorry I disturbed you; you were making some interesting observations to yourself about black swans as I came up."

"Yes," rejoined Elsie, "I was thinking I would have some black swans on this piece of water. You remember, I spoke the other day about my father buying Carnbury. I wrote to him at once and told him how much I wished he would."

"That was very enterprising; and does your father always do as you wish?"

"He does generally; I think he will this time, anyhow."

"I hope he will," replied her companion, "it would be an uncommonly good thing for poor Carnbury."

"I dare say it would," rejoined Elsie contemptuously; "it would give him a chance of acting honestly for once in his life."

"Have you heard," continued Mr. Nowell, taking no notice of her last remark, "that he is more terribly down on his luck than ever?"

"I heard that story about his racehorse," replied the girl, "but it only made me feel cross with him. He ought to have kept clear of such risks."

"That is just what Smedley says."

"And what do you say yourself?" asked Elsie severely.

"I say," was the answer, "that I would like to give poor Carnbury another chance. I hope you won't blame me for not kicking a man when he's down."

Then there was a pause in the conversation.

Elsie reseated herself and began digging up weeds with her parasol.

"How long did you say you are staying at Carnbury?" she asked suddenly.

"I mentioned no length of time, it is

uncertain. But as I said before, if you care to walk about the park—and it is certainly the most picturesque bit of the neighbourhood—please do not let my being here prevent you. There is plenty of room for us both, and if by chance we meet now and then, I for my part shall look on it as a charming break in the monotony of my solitude."

"You are very civil," replied Elsie, "and if you are quite sure that there is plenty of room for us both, I think I probably shall come again. I like looking round and making plans for the future."

And she had gone again; she had felt that it would be stupid and prudish to keep away, and she and Mr. Nowell had met several times, always apparently by chance, though once he had brought her a bunch of roses, and once a basket of strawberries, which did not look as if his appearance was purely fortuitous, and he had encouraged her to talk of the alterations and amendments which she considered necessary at Carnbury. Altogether, in spite of the extremely bad opinion she had of him, and of the deception he was playing off on her, Mr. Nowell became a great resource for Elsie in the days during which she was waiting for her father's letter.

It came in due time—the momentous letter—and Elsie, having swallowed her breakfast hastily, took it out into the garden, where she could read it unquestioned and undisturbed. It was short, decisive, and completely overwhelming:

"MY DEAR ELSIE," it said. "Yours of the 6th reached me this morning. Its contents astonished me greatly. I cannot go into the reasons which prevented my becoming the purchaser of Carnbury Place. It is sufficient to say that they were excellent ones, and that on no account can I alter my decision, or reconsider the matter. I hope you have not spoken of your extraordinary idea to any one. I should be extremely annoyed if any report of the sort reached the ears of Lord Carnbury or his lawyer. I might say something about the unsuitability of your meddling in such a serious matter of business, but I will not scold you in a letter. But for the future you must remember that such interference is inexcusably out of place.—Your affectionate Father, M. NEWTON."

This emphatic wording of her father's resolution Elsie read and re-read at least six times, before she could realise that it

was the death-blow of all her dreams and delights of the past three weeks. She had been settling the colour of the curtains in her boudoir, and there had not been the ghost of a chance that she would ever cross the threshold of Carnbury Place again. Her mind refused to grasp the idea. She wished—oh! how she wished—that she had told Ruth all about it from the very beginning. If she had done so she would have had the consolation of talking over her disappointment with some one, instead of having to hide it up and say nothing about it. But she had kept her secret so far, and now her father forbade her to mention it, and there was no one to whom she could turn for a word of sympathy. Unless—well, yes, there was Mr. Nowell; and after all she was bound to tell him her father's ultimatum; she felt sure his stay at Carnbury Place had been prolonged that he might hear it. She wondered if he would betray any of the disappointment he would most certainly feel. He would probably talk of "poor Carnbury," and pretend he looked concerned for his old friend. Anyway, she would go and tell him, he being the only person she could tell. So putting her letter in her pocket, she started for Carnbury in the lowest possible spirits. She did not even cast a glance towards the lake; she walked resolutely on under the tower gateway, into the great courtyard, where the mastiff barked at her as furiously as before, but otherwise nothing happened.

For a few moments she stood looking round. Why did not Mr. Nowell see her and come to the rescue, or why did not the uncivil old housekeeper enquire into the cause of the uproar? But no one stirred, and Elsie suddenly wondered why she had placed herself in such an invidious position.

"Lie down, you noisy brute!" she said vindictively to the dog, and then she turned and walked back in the direction she had come, to meet Mr. Nowell coming briskly towards the house.

"Good morning, Miss Newton," he began cheerily. "Did you not see me as you passed? I was sitting on your favourite seat by the lake. Have you come at last to see the haunted chamber, and to decide what alterations you will make in the domestic arrangements of the Carnbury ghost?"

To his surprise Elsie looked up at him with eyes in which the tears were swimming.

"Please do not make stupid jokes," she said irritably. "I'm not likely to make any alterations in anything at Carnbury."

"I beg your pardon," he said humbly. "Does that mean that your father does not approve of your great scheme?"

"Approve of it," cried Elsie, "he utterly refuses to have anything to say to it. I'm sure he has excellent reasons for his refusal, though he doesn't mention them. People say that Lord Carnbury is a horrid man to deal with, and I dare say my father does not choose to have anything more to do with him."

"I am very sorry you are disappointed," said Mr. Nowell kindly, "but I do not think you should try to think that Lord Carnbury is responsible for your disappointment. Remember, the buying and selling of a place like this is a serious transaction."

"My father," went on Elsie, "hopes I have said nothing which will lead Lord Carnbury or his lawyer to fancy he is going to make a new offer. I have talked about it to no one but you."

"And you may rest assured I have not spoken of it to any one," was the reply.

"I wanted to tell you about it," said Elsie; "and now I think the best thing I can do is to go away and forget all about the castles I have been building for these last three weeks."

"I am going away too," rejoined Mr. Nowell. "I leave here to-morrow morning. But I am not going to try and forget the castles you have built in the last three weeks. I shouldn't succeed if I tried, and I don't want to. I shall think of them, and of you very often, and with great pleasure."

He paused, but Elsie did not speak, or even look at him; she walked steadily on down the avenue, and he walked on beside her.

"I should like you to think of me sometimes, too," he continued. "Indeed, I cannot say 'good-bye' without asking you for something far beyond an occasional remembrance. We have not known one another long, and our acquaintance has been quite unconventional; still it has been long and complete enough for me to make a great discovery concerning myself and you." He paused again, but Elsie still marched unsympathetically along with half-averted face. "Ah, child," he cried, suddenly seizing her hand, and turning her towards him. "It is harder to say than I thought it would be; but now I have begun I will finish—I will know my fate before we part. I loved you the moment I saw you. I can scarcely hope it is the same with you; but do you think

that some day, if I wait, that I may win you for my wife?"

Then Elsie looked up at him. Her face was very pale, and her eyes blazed with passion.

"How dare you," she cried, "how dare you pretend to care for me! You call me child; I am not child enough to be deceived as you are trying to deceive me. I know who you are. I have known all along. You are a wicked, wicked man."

Then wrenching her hand from his she turned and fled, leaving him half angry and wholly dismayed by her passionate outbreak.

"What is it, dearie?" asked Ruth a little later, as Elsie with a tear-stained face rushed past her on the stairs. "Whatever is the matter?"

But Elsie gave no answer, she rushed on into her room, locked the door, and flinging herself on her knees beside the bed wept the angriest tears that had ever burned her cheeks. What an unforeseen end to her adventure! Of course she had known in a vague sort of way that Lord Carnbury would like to find a wife with a fortune, but she had never thought of his trying to secure one in such a barefaced way. What would Ruth say if she knew, or her father? They would probably lay some of the blame on her, and say she had placed herself in a false position. Perhaps he, too, thought she was a bold sort of girl, who need not be treated with much respect. It was too hateful to think of. How she despised him; oh, how she despised him, and then she wept afresh.

Presently the handle of her door was softly turned.

"Miss Elsie, dear," came Ruth's voice coaxingly from the other side. "Won't you let me in. I've got something most particular to say to you."

"I'd rather not hear it," replied Elsie ungraciously; "I've got a most dreadful headache."

"Let me bring you a cup of tea, then—and tell you while you drink it."

"I don't want any tea, and I don't want to hear anything."

But Ruth was not to be daunted.

"I know you're put out, dearie," she persisted, "but there's no sense in locking me out, and I must say my say, if I have to shout it through the keyhole."

Thus adjured, Elsie turned the key, and stood the picture of misery on the threshold.

"My head's dreadful," she said, "I can't talk."

"I don't want you to talk, dearie. I know all you can tell me—at least pretty near all—about what's vexed you."

"You don't, Ruth!" cried Elsie; "how can you know?"

"Well, there's only one way I could have heard besides from you; there's only one person could ha' told tales of you and himself, and he's been and told them. Indeed, he's here now, and it's him that made me come up to you."

"How dare he!" cried Elsie, "and, Ruth, how dare you?"

"Why shouldn't I dare?" asked Ruth, "and why shouldn't he? If he's got the heart of a man he couldn't let you go off like that without trying to see what made you so angry. He's fond of you, dearie, I can see that; and he's set his heart on having you. It's a funny kind of beginning to a courtship; but, la! there's no saying how a courtship can't begin. Did you think he made too free to speak so soon, dearie? You see, he is going away, and it was quite nat'ral."

"Ruth," said Elsie indignantly, "I know you don't speak of Lord Carnbury as harshly as Robert does, but surely you don't want me to marry him—to marry Lord Carnbury?"

"Lord Carnbury, child! You don't mean to say he has been pretending to be his lordship? Well, that was a poor joke! He might ha' thought o' something better than that."

"Do you mean to say," asked Elsie slowly, "that he isn't Lord Carnbury?"

"No, missy, he's nothing but a far-off cousin of his lordship, and he's no more like him than chalk's like cheese."

"Then," said Miss Newton resolutely, "I think I had better go and apologise to him for my abominable behaviour."

Elsie's apologies and Mr. Nowell's explanation of himself and his business at Carnbury lasted a considerable time, and were apparently quite satisfactory, for when at last he took his leave looking extremely radiant, he said to Ruth:

"Thank you for your very effectual help in my perplexity. I am leaving Miss Newton to tell you how we have settled our misunderstanding."

"And I don't think my mistake was so utterly foolish, Ruth," said Elsie, by way of conclusion to the long history which she told her old nurse. "You see, it did look very much as if he were Lord Carnbury keeping himself close, and it was just the sort of trick that a wicked man would try

to play off on a simple-minded person like myself. Besides, probably he will be Lord Carnbury some day, for the present lord isn't married, and he's not such a very distant cousin; and anyhow, he's going to have Carnbury whether he succeeds to the title or not, for he's got lots of money, and he's going to buy it, just to help his cousin out of his difficulties. He actually loves that horrid man for the sake of old times, which shows what a good heart he has. And oh, Ruth, to think how hard I tried to despise him, and you know in my inmost heart I was fond of him all the time. And now I must write to father. I wonder whether he will send the same kind of answer as he did to my other letter? I think I shall die if he does."

But Sir Mark did not send the same kind of answer. He promised to consider the matter when he returned to England, and the result of his consideration was unreservedly favourable.

PENDRED'S PREDICAMENT.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

It had been a blazing September day, and now, in the cool of the evening, three people were lounging in the garden of a pleasant, old-fashioned cottage in the suburbs of Sandport. They were Tom Pendred and his bride of a week, who had come to Sandport for their honeymoon, and Tom's oldest friend, Frank Gaskin. Circumstances had so fallen out that the two men had seen nothing of each other for more than a year until this morning, when they had accidentally met on the parade, neither of them having known of the other's presence in Sandport. In by-gone days they had had few secrets from each other, and they were now posting themselves up in all that had happened since their last meeting.

"You have not once mentioned your Uncle Vince's name," said Gaskin presently. "I hope he is well and that you and he keep on the best of terms."

"On the contrary, we are on no terms at all. Four months ago he bade me never darken his door again, and at the same time intimated, with unnecessary exuberance of language, that in the course of the next twenty-four hours my name would be struck out of his will."

Gaskin gave vent to a low whistle.

"You must have played your cards very badly, old fellow, to bring about such a state of affairs as that. But you always had a peppery temper."

"It was all on account of good-for-nothing me," interpolated Pen's pretty young wife.

Pendred was in the act of lighting a cigar. As soon as he had got it well under way he crossed his legs, lay back in his chair, and said:

"As you know already, after my father's death I owed a good deal to my Uncle Vince, and I trust I am not ungrateful for what he has done for me; but when he one day told me with bland complacency that he had chosen a wife for me, and gave me further to understand that he expected me to unreservedly approve of his choice, I must confess that the instinct of rebellion rose up strongly within me. From what I could gather, an old friend of his had just returned to England after a residence of many years abroad, bringing with him a grown-up daughter. Thereupon they had laid their heads together and come to the conclusion that it would be a capital thing if the nephew of one of them should wed the daughter of the other. There was one impediment, however, as far as I was concerned which made any such arrangement impossible, and that was the fact that I was already an engaged man, although my uncle was not aware of it. Well, not to weary you, I may just say that I then and there unfurled the standard of revolt, and that a battle royal ensued between us, with what result I have already told you."

"And you are still at daggers-drawn?" queried Gaskin.

"If you like to term it so. There have been no more active hostilities, simply because we have never met since that day. All the same, I am sorry that he has chosen to take such a course with me, for I have a very genuine affection for the old boy. Under a crusty exterior he hides many fine qualities."

"Is he aware of your marriage?"

"Not to my knowledge. Certainly he has not heard of it through me."

After a little further conversation, Gaskin, who was leaving Sandport that evening, found that it was time for him to go. Pendred proffered to walk with his friend as far as the station and see him off.

They reached the train not a minute too soon, and their last handshake had to be given at once. Then Pen strolled leisurely back to Laburnam Cottage, and found his wife waiting for him at the garden-gate.

Presently Mrs. Pendred sat down to the piano, while her husband proceeded to charge his meerschaum with tobacco. A few minutes later an exclamation broke from his lips, and when his wife turned her head it was to see him standing on the hearthrug, his face devoid of every vestige of colour, and feeling frantically first in one pocket and then in another.

"What is the matter, dear? What are you searching for?" she asked.

"My purse: I cannot find it."

"Perhaps you left it upstairs when you went to wash your hands before going out."

"That is impossible. I had it when I went to the station, because I bought some cigars in Bridge Street for Gaskin to smoke in the train. My pocket must have been picked while I was squeezing my way through the crowd at the terminus."

Husband and wife stared at each other in blank dismay.

"Did it contain much money?" asked Mrs. Pen presently, although she could pretty well guess what the answer would be.

"Every penny I possessed in the world. So ends our honeymoon," he added a moment later with a groan.

"I have a couple of pounds, or thereabouts, in my dressing-bag," said his wife.

"Which will just about suffice to pay our landlady's bill. It's a good thing our return tickets were not in the purse. There's no help for it, dear; we must pack up and be off to-morrow, or next day at the latest."

Tom Pendred's income, as a clerk in the employ of a London firm, was one hundred and thirty pounds a year, and on that income he had been rash enough to marry. The savings of both, with the exception of their wedding-expenses and a few pounds to pay for their honeymoon trip, had been expended on the furnishing of the pleasant little home which was waiting to receive them on their return. Tom's next month's salary would not be due for a fortnight to come. Looked at from any point of view, it was a most unpleasant predicament for a young couple to find themselves in at the outset of their matrimonial career.

Next morning was as bright and sunny as many preceding mornings had been.

"Oh, what a shame—what a pity that we should have to leave this before our holiday is half over!" exclaimed Fanny, as she and her husband leaned over the garden-gate after breakfast, drinking in the fresh sweetness of the scene before them. "Is there no way, none at all, out of our difficulty?"

Her voice broke a little in her own despite as she put the question.

"None that I can see," answered Pen gloomily. "Even if I knew any one of whom I could ask the loan of ten pounds, I don't think that either of us would much enjoy our holiday if it had to be paid for with borrowed money."

"That's true, dear," assented Fan mournfully. "Heigho! I suppose that presently I had better begin my packing."

"No, hang it all, Fan, we need not start before evening. So make haste and put on your togs and we'll have a long, glorious ramble this morning, farther than we have ever been before."

Pen had been alone for a matter of five minutes, when his wife came down the garden with a rush.

"Oh, Tom dear, I've got an idea—such an idea!" she exclaimed. "It came to me all in a moment while I was arranging my hat in front of the glass."

"Is it such a rare thing for you to have an idea that you must take the universe into your confidence in this breathless style?"

"Now, do try to be serious—very serious, there's a good boy. What I want to tell you is this: some time ago I read how three or four young men laid a wager with certain others that they would have a month's holiday at the seaside without it costing them a penny, and further, that they would come back at the end of the time with money in pocket. Well, they won their wager, and this was how they managed it. They all had a fair knowledge of music, and they got themselves up after the style of a troupe of nigger minstrels, going from one seaside place to another, after spending a few days at each. But whether the story is true or not, it has given me an idea. You play the fiddle passably well, and, as you know, I can sing a little. Why should not you and I for the time being become a couple of wandering minstrels—say, for an hour and a half every evening after dusk, and try whether we can't in that way earn enough to enable us to stay out the rest of our holiday?"

"Do you mean that we should black our faces and—?"

"Nothing of the kind, you foolish boy. Did I not say that we would only perform after dusk? There's not a creature in the place who knows either of us, so that we should run no risk of detection."

"But about gathering in the coin—should there be any to gather—who would have to do that—you or I?"

"Neither of us. That is the most disagreeable necessity of the case, and it must be done for us by deputy. We must find a way of arranging for that later on. The question is, what do you think of my idea? Will you agree to give it a trial, or—or is the seven-fifteen train this evening to take us back to London?"

"Upon my word, Fan, your proposition is enough to knock the breath out of a steady-going sobersides like myself. And yet that it's not without its fascinations I admit. But let us set out on our ramble, and as we walk we will consider it more in detail."

The consideration thus involved resulted in Pendred's determination to test the practicability of his wife's scheme. Instead of leaving by the seven-fifteen train, the evening was devoted by them to practising such pieces and songs as they thought would be likely to prove most popular with the general public.

It seemed to Pen that if he did not want to be recognised by daylight as one of the wandering minstrels of overnight, some slight change in his appearance was necessary. A false moustache, a pair of spectacles and a muffler round his throat, would answer his purpose, and, like Fanny's ulster and veil, effectually disguise his personality.

It was at Mrs. Pen's suggestion that her husband sought an interview with a certain mountebank, who, in company with his son, a bright-looking lad of twelve, was in the habit of posturing and tumbling on the beach for the delectation of the idlers there congregated, and the replenishment of his own pocket. As the lad's services were not needed by his father after dusk, a bargain was readily struck between the latter and Pen, by which, in return for a stipulated payment, Micky was "to go round with the hat," as his father euphemistically termed it—in other words, collect whatever coin of the realm our young folk might be able to witch out of the pockets of their auditors. Micky was made a happy boy by having a cheap serge suit and a pair of sand-shoes bought him. Never before had he been so smart.

That Pen and his wife were somewhat nervous as to the result of their unconventional experiment may be taken for granted; but Fanny, like the spirited little woman she was, contrived to effectually mask her own tremors in order the better to cheer her husband, and, indeed, laughed and joked so gaily about the affair, that at

length Pen could not help saying, with a suspicion of huffiness:

"I don't believe you have any more nerves than a pair of nut-crackers. Here am I all of a twitter, while you contrive to keep as cool as the proverbial cucumber."

But a surprise was in store for the young couple of a kind they little dreamt of.

In the course of the afternoon their landlady brought in the usual weekly "Visitors' List," which Fanny at once pounced upon. She wanted to see her name in print for the first time as a wife. Her eyes picked it out, in a moment, and a secret blush flamed into her cheeks. Presently she gave utterance to a little cry of surprise and dismay which brought Tom to her side. Without a word she handed him the list, her thumb marking a certain paragraph. Tom took it, and even he changed colour when, among the names of those staying at the "Golden Griffin Hotel," he read that of his uncle, Mr. Tidcombe Vince.

"It must be the old boy," he said. "There can't be two Tidcombe Vincés in the world."

"What if he should encounter us on the parade or anywhere!" said Fanny with a dismayed face. "Hadm't we better get away from Sandport at once?"

"Certainly not. Supposing he should meet us, what then? He can't bite our heads off. Most likely he would pass us with a stare and take no further notice. On the other hand, supposing he were to speak, I should seize the opportunity to introduce to him the wife I am proud to have chosen for myself in preference to the one he would have chosen for me."

CHAPTER II.

Nor till the shades of evening were deepening over land and water and the lamps in the distance were sparkling like fireflies, did our young people venture to set out on their expedition. Before turning down the gas in their sitting-room they took a final look at each other.

"I don't believe your uncle would know you if he passed you close a dozen times," said Fanny. "That horrid moustache makes you look a perfect fright; and then, the spectacles! But of course I should know you anywhere."

"And I you, darling. Not twenty veils could hide you from me."

Their plan, as already arranged, was to keep away from the sea-front and what might be termed the cheaper parts of the

town—which, in point of fact, were already well supplied with amusements of various kinds—and confine their attentions to the better class of hotels and boarding-houses. Their first essay was to take place in Nelson Square, which stood some distance back in a sort of semi-seclusion, and consisted for the most part of highly genteel lodging-houses, which just now were crammed with visitors. On reaching the square our minstrels found that dinner was in full swing at several of the houses. The evening was so warm that in many cases the windows were thrown open, and sounds of talk and laughter, of the tinkling of glass and the clatter of knives and forks, floated out into the lamp-lighted dusk. Here and there the unshaded windows allowed all that was going on inside to be visible to the passer-by. Pen and his wife wandered slowly round the square in an undetermined, half-hearted way, neither of them venturing to make a suggestion to the other. It was Micky who brought them back to the necessity of either facing their position, or of giving the affair up as a bad job.

"This here's a fust-rate pitch, sir, if that's what you're looking for," he ventured to remark to Pen, coming to a halt as he spoke. "You see, sir, it's a corner, so that you gets the houses both ways and can keep one eye on one side of 'em an' t'other on t'other."

The wisdom of Micky's advice was self-evident. "If we are to begin at all, we had better make a start here and at once," said Pen to his wife.

In the centre of the square was an enclosed shrubbery, against the railings of which, and fronting the houses, our little party took their stand. Then Pen produced his fiddle from its green baize covering and, after one or two of those preliminary ear-torturing scrapes which seem to act as an invocation to the spirit of the instrument, he struck into an air from one of the light operas of the day which nearly everybody just then was either whistling or humming. But Pen had no intention of wearying his audience with anything so trivial and commonplace, and as soon as he had achieved his object, which was to arouse their attention, he brought the air to an abrupt conclusion, following which there was a pause for a couple of minutes, and then, simultaneously from violin and throat, rang out the opening notes of the song entitled "Thy Voice is near me in my Dreams," at that time in the height of its

popularity. Mrs. Pen's organ was a full rich contralto, which she managed with remarkable skill, considering that her only teacher had been a broken-down third-rate master. She was a little woman—"a mere armful," as Pen sometimes laughingly remarked—and it seemed marvellous how such a full-throated body of song could be poured forth from so alight and almost fragile-looking a tenement.

Soon figures could be seen at several of the windows, peering out into the night, and when the last note had rung out there was a moment or two of silence, which was broken by an audible clapping of hands interlarded with "bravas" and "encores." By this time, from one point or another, quite a crowd had begun to gather.

Then Pen dashed into a gallop adapted from a half barbaric Czech air, which had in it the quality of setting the feet of all young people who heard it pit-patting in unison. This presently died away in a long-drawn wail, and therewith merged into the tune of "Robin Adair." Then Fanny's voice took up the words, infusing them as she went on with an amount of pathos which brought a lump into the throats of many who heard her, and caused the eyes of others to cloud with tears.

Hardly had the song come to an end before Micky, who was of opinion that the show had gone on quite long enough for nothing, alighted away from Pen's side, and began his round in search of contributions. There was nothing of the mendicant's whine about his "If you please, ladies and gentlemen," but a sort of patient wistfulness in the way he spoke the words which of itself was enough to unloosen many purse-strings. From one open window to another he went, cap in hand, and, in nearly every case, his appeal was liberally responded to, Pen, meanwhile, playing a "mélange" of popular airs. After that, by way of "finale," Mrs. Pen gave "O! mon fils," from "Le Prophète." As they moved away, not without a little crowd of followers, a voice from one of the windows called out, "Don't forget to come again to-morrow."

It boots not to follow them further on this the first night of their experiment. It is enough to record that when, at the close, they came to count up their gains, they found themselves a clear sovereign in pocket.

"I think, darling," said Pen to his wife as he kissed her, "that we shall be under no compulsion to bring our honeymoon to a close yet awhile."

CHAPTER III.

On the second evening Nelson Square was again the first halting-place of our minstrels, nor had they any reason to complain of their reception. Thence they made their way to the "Palatine Hotel," the biggest and most sumptuous caravanserai of which Sandport could boast. By this time dinner was pretty generally over, and on the piazza which ran along the front of the hotel were gathered a motley assemblage of guests, who were sitting or lounging on almost as motley a collection of wicker or cane-seated chairs.

Not without certain qualms and misgivings did our young folk make up their minds to face an audience which they might reasonably suppose would prove to be far more critical than any before which they had yet ventured to appear. But any such misgivings were quickly dispelled. So often was Mrs. Pen encoered that more than an hour went by before they were permitted to make their final bow.

"And now for the 'Golden Griffin' and Uncle Vince," said Pen to his wife.

The "Golden Griffin" differed from the "Palatine" as chalk does from cheese. It was one of those old-fashioned, intensely conservative, but at the same time quietly comfortable hosteleries, of which a few may still be found by those who know where to look for them.

On reaching it Pen reconnoitred the windows carefully. His hope was to find his uncle seated at one of them, nor was he disappointed. "There he is, I should know him anywhere," he said presently to his wife, pointing out a bulky figure seated by an open window on the first floor, one leg being evidently supported by a rest. Uncle Vince was smoking a long clay pipe, his invariable practice of an evening.

As Fanny was singing "Kathleen Mavourneen," Pen could see his uncle's hand beating time softly on the window-sill, and when it had to come to an end he could be observed dabbing his eyes vigorously with his handkerchief. Five minutes later he sent out half-a-crown by the waiter, and asked for a repetition of the song. When that had come to an end, Pen deemed it best to adjourn. "We won't give him too much of a good thing all at once," he said; "we shall be the more welcome next time for not overdoing it now."

That evening their money-takings came to close upon thirty shillings, out of which

Micky had a shilling given him for himself.

On the third evening they found Uncle Vince as before, seated with his pipe by the open window. On this occasion Fanny sang, "Auld Robin Gray." As before, he sent out half-a-crown by the waiter with a request that it should be sung again.

So a week sped by, at the end of which the weather broke, the evenings becoming cold and showery. Thereupon a great exodus of visitors set in. But by that time our young people found themselves in ample funds to last them till the end of their honeymoon.

Their success had far exceeded their expectations. They had never missed including the "Golden Griffin" in their rounds, and Uncle Vince had never once been absent from his window, nor had once missed sending out half-a-crown by the waiter.

The evening of their last appearance in public had come.

"I think it is due to your uncle to tell him that we are about to disappear into the 'ewigkeit,'" said Fanny. "If we don't, he may sit and wait for us evening after evening for goodness knows how long."

"Right you are," answered her husband.

Accordingly, when the waiter made his appearance, Pen said to him:

"Will you be good enough to tell the gentleman who each evening has so generously sent us half-a-crown that this is our last appearance, and that if he will favour us by naming any two songs he would like to hear again, we will do our best to please him."

Two minutes later the waiter was back.

"The gentleman's compliments, and will you oblige him by stepping as far as his room?"

For a moment or two both Pen and Fanny were utterly taken aback. Then ensued a hurried colloquy in whispers.

"It would never do for him to see me at close quarters," said Pen. "Those keen eyes of his would penetrate my disguise in a moment. You must face him alone, dear, but you will find me looking out for you when the interview is over."

"But what am I to say to him? What am I to tell him?" demanded Fanny in a flutter.

"There's one thing you must not tell him, which is, that you are my wife. For the rest, you must be guided by circumstances—by the questions he puts to you. If you play your cards cleverly there's no

foretelling what may, or may not, come to pass." With that he squeezed her hand and vanished in the darkness.

"Sit down, my dear young lady, and, John, pour out a glass of sherry," were Uncle Vince's first words when Fanny had been ushered into his room. "But where's your husband, or whatever he is—the young man who plays the fiddle?"

"My brother, sir; he begged that you would excuse him on account of an important engagement."

"Well, well; it's you I want to speak to. What's this I hear about this being your last evening in Sandport? Why's that, pray?"

"Oh no, sir, this is not our last evening in Sandport; our time will not be up for another week. But this is the last evening on which my brother and I intend to sing and play in public."

Uncle Vince looked mystified.

"I don't quite follow you," he said a little testily.

"You see sir, my brother and I are not professional people—quite the contrary." With that she went on to enlighten him as to the reason which had first led to their appearing in public. "And now that we have made enough money to see us comfortably through our holiday," she said in conclusion, "we have decided to retire once more into private life."

Uncle Vince lay back in his chair and guffawed heartily.

"This caps everything," he said. "If I had known what your object was, instead of sending you out half-a-crown, I would have made it five shillings, hang me if I wouldn't! But what you have just told me goes to prove that neither of you are very well off, eh?"

"We are rich in health and content, sir, therefore we can hardly be called poor."

"Humph! Plainly put, you both have to earn your living, I suppose?"

Fanny bowed assent.

"And how, pray, do you earn yours, if I may ask?"

"Up till a week or two ago I filled the post of companion to an elderly lady. At present, as you are aware, sir, I am taking a little holiday."

"Do you know, you sing very charmingly."

"I have been told before to-day that I have some small gift that way."

"With such a voice you ought to make your fortune—yes, nothing less than your fortune. Well, now, Miss—Miss—"

"Miss Iveson, sir."

"Well, now, Miss Iveson, I have a little proposition to make to you. You tell me that you intend remaining in Sandport for about a week to come. So do I, perhaps for longer than that. Now, I have taken a great fancy to your singing, a very great fancy indeed. What, then, do you say to coming here for an hour and a half every evening during the rest of your stay, in order to sing and play to me? The remuneration I am prepared to offer you is half-a-guinea a night. If your brother likes to come and accompany you on his fiddle, well and good; if not, there's the piano, and you can accompany yourself. What say you, young lady, what say you?"

"Simply this, sir, that I shall be very pleased to accept your offer; my brother, however, will not be able to join me."

Pen was delighted with the news his wife had for him.

"It is you, darling, who will be the means of bringing my uncle and me together again," he said. "I feel sure of it."

"My dear Tom, you are far too sanguine. Because your uncle happens to be a bit taken with my singing, is that any reason why he should forgive your rash marriage with a tocherless girl? Besides, he would not unnaturally regard himself as having been victimised by a trick."

"But then, you see, dearie, he won't find out who you are, at any rate not till you have had time to creep up his sleeve, and I am quite sure that the more he sees of you the fonder of you he will become; and as for his being made the victim of a trick, you must bear in mind that it is he who has sought you out, and not you him. It was through no design on the part of either of us that he sent for you."

Eight o'clock next evening found Mrs. Pen at the "Golden Griffin." Her husband had escorted her as far as the corner of the street, and would be there in waiting for her on her return. Uncle Vince greeted her with much cordiality. The evening was chilly, but the curtains had been drawn, and a cheery fire burned in the grate. Wine and biscuits were on the table, and, wonderful to relate, for once in a way Uncle Vince had contrived to dispense with his evening pipe.

"I have had the piano tuned for you," he said, "and they tell me it's a very fair instrument—for an hotel. And there's a heap of music for you to pick and choose from. Now, I don't want you to be asking me every few minutes whether you shall

to play this or sing the other. I want you to follow your own inclinations in the matter. Perhaps before the evening is over I may ask you to sing one or two old favourites."

The evening proved a scarcely less enjoyable one to Fanny than it undoubtedly did to Uncle Vince. As he shook hands with her at parting he pressed a tiny packet into her palm; it was her promised fee done up in tissue paper. His last words to her were: "You won't fail to come again to-morrow."

And so one evening after another sped by till the end of Pen's holiday was at hand. On the fourth occasion of Fanny's going to the "Golden Griffin," she found there a pleasant elderly lady, whom Uncle Vince introduced to her as "my cousin and housekeeper, Mrs. Askew," and went on to explain that she had come to Sandport for a change prior to their return to London.

This remark seemed to offer Fanny the opening she had been longing for, and presently she said: "Like yourself, Mr. Vince, my brother and I must presently go back to town. To-morrow, I am sorry to say, will have to be my last evening with you."

Uncle Vince's face fell. "It is I who ought to be, and am, sorry, my dear Miss Iveson," he said. "I was in hopes that your stay in Sandport would last as long as my own. Do you know, I believe that your singing and playing have done me more good than all the doctor's stuff."

Next evening there was a surprise in store for Fanny on her arrival at the "Griffin."

"My dear," began Uncle Vince as soon as she had taken off her hat and gloves—he had got into the way of adopting a semi-paternal tone towards her—"my dear, I've been thinking about what you said last night, that this is to be your last evening with us. Now, I think you gave me to understand in the course of our first interview that at the present time you are out of a situation. Such being the case, what is there to hinder you from coming and staying with me and my cousin for a time? I won't press you for an answer now. Think over what I have said and let me know your decision when you come to-morrow."

It was a proposition that fairly took Fanny's breath away.

"Did I not prophesy that you would succeed in creeping up the old boy's sleeve, artful minx that you are?" was Pen's remark when she told him.

"Does that imply that you wish me to accept your uncle's offer?"

"Well, you see, darling, there's a great deal to be said in favour of it."

"I am quite aware of that. But, on the other hand, have you realised the fact that by my doing as he wishes, we shall be parted for an indefinite time to come, and that—and that to-morrow you will have to go back to London and leave me behind? Oh, Tom!" She flung herself sobbing into his arms.

It is not needful that we should follow the discussion further. In the result, it was decided that, however painful a temporary separation might be, it was advisable to put up with it in the hope that through Fanny's good offices some means might ultimately be devised of bringing uncle and nephew together again.

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE VINCE stayed on at Sandport for another week, hoping for an improvement in the weather, which never came. Then, one morning, with the abruptness that was characteristic of him, he announced that they would start for London by the noon train.

Fanny at once leapt to the conclusion that her stay with the old gentleman had come to an end, but within a few minutes of his announcement of their departure he took her aside and asked her whether, as a very special favour, she would consent to stay with him and Mrs. Askew for another month, at the end of which time it was his intention to go abroad for the winter. Seeing, perhaps, a little disappointment in her face, he added: "You must stay with me if you can, my dear, in order to oblige an old man who will hardly live to ask many more favours of anybody." His voice quavered a little as he spoke the last words.

Fanny forgot her disappointment in a moment. "Dear Mr. Vince," she said gently, "I will gladly stay with you for another month."

Westray House, where Uncle Vince lived when at home, was situated in one of the outer London suburbs. It was a commodious old-fashioned mansion, standing in its own well-timbered grounds of three or four acres. It had the air of being quite in the country, while yet being well within touch of town. Seven minutes' walk from it brought you to a railway station, whence a half-hourly service of trains ran to the City.

Fanny had at once written to her husband, informing him of her promise to stay another month with Uncle Vince after his return, and Pen in his reply had given his cordial assent to her doing so. During

the month in question it would have been next to impossible for husband and wife to have met, seeing that, except on Saturdays, Pen could not get away from the office before five o'clock, and that of an evening Uncle Vince would hardly let Fanny out of his sight for more than a few minutes at a time, had it not fortunately happened that Pen still had in his possession a duplicate key—originally presented to him by his uncle—which gave admittance by means of a side door into the grounds of Westray House. Accordingly, it was arranged between the young couple that on two nights a week Tom should make use of his key, and that after the rest of the household had gone to their own rooms—Uncle Vince made a point of retiring as soon as the hall clock had struck eleven—Fanny should steal downstairs, let herself out of the house by way of the kitchen entrance, and join her husband for a stolen half-hour under the stars. Sometimes they met only to part again a few minutes later, Pen being under the necessity of catching the last train back to town.

And so the days sped on, without, to all seeming, bringing them a single step nearer the attainment of the special object which was equally dear to the hearts of both. No wonder that at length they began to despair and to tell each other that the scheme on which they had so fondly plumed themselves had turned out a wretched failure.

But presently something happened which Fanny was too quick-witted not to take advantage of. One afternoon Uncle Vince brought home a new photograph album. The old one, which had been in use for quite a number of years, had indeed grown very shabby; so in the drawing-room after dinner he asked Fanny to help him to transfer the portraits from one book to the other, among them, as the young wife was quite aware, being one of her husband. Uncle Vince took up each portrait in turn and brought his spectacles to bear on it for a moment or two before passing it on to Fanny for her deft fingers to insert into the new album. Fan's heart beat a good deal faster than common when at length the old gentleman came to Pen's portrait. He stared at it longer than at any of the others, but when at length he passed it on to Fanny it was simply with an inarticulate grunt. It was rather singular, however, that just at that moment he should find it needful to twitch his spectacles off his nose and rub the glasses vigorously with his handkerchief before putting them on again.

Fanny was gazing at the likeness with a meditative air.

"Whose portrait is this, Mr. Vince?" she asked. "It's a face which I think most people would like—I mean the expression of it. And really, if I may be allowed to say so, it seems to me to bear a quite remarkable resemblance to what you yourself must have looked like at the same age."

"Do you think so, my dear; do you really think so?" he demanded eagerly. Then he seemed to check himself. "It's the likeness of a good-for-nothing nephew of mine," he resumed in a different tone. "Yes, of an ungrateful, good-for-nothing scamp."

Fanny sighed audibly. He glanced sharply at her, but said no more.

And so the days slipped away till three weeks were gone.

Uncle Vince, like many people who have led active business lives, was a man of fixed rules and regulations. "A time for everything, and everything in its place," was one of his favourite maxims, and one which he did his best to reduce to practice. Thus, at ten o'clock precisely every Saturday morning, on which day he never went to the City, he would himself discharge, clean, and reload the brace of big, old-fashioned pistols forming a portion of the stand of arms which decorated the wall space between the two high, narrow windows that lighted the upstairs corridor. Westray House had been twice broken into by burglars, and it was Uncle Vince's whim to have the pistols kept loaded in case of emergency.

One night Uncle Vince's slumbers were broken by a couple of loud reports.

"Thieves," he said aloud, as he sat up in bed. "Carson must have heard 'em and have taken the pistols downstairs with him."

By this time he was out of bed, and having hastily donned a few garments, he emerged from his bedroom carrying a lighted candle in one hand and a poker in the other, only to encounter Carson, the one manservant who slept on the premises, face to face in the corridor.

"Here I am," said Uncle Vince, in the belief that the man had been on the point of calling him. "Did you hit any of the rascals, or have they got clean away for the third time?"

"Lord bless you, sir, it wasn't me as fired the shots. I thought for sure it was you yourself, sir, a-trying to pot 'em."

Uncle Vince stared for a moment but did not speak. Then his eyes turned to the stand of arms. The pistols were gone.

"Come along," he said to Carson,

"there's some mystery here, and the sooner we get to the bottom of it the better."

The mystery was solved when they reached the dining-room, the door of which was wide open, as was also one of its two windows which gave on the lawn. One gas jet, half turned down, was alight; there were a couple of overturned chairs near the window, and on the centre table, a decanter of wine and another of brandy, to obtain which a door in the sideboard had been prised open.

But scarcely giving himself time to notice these minor details, Uncle Vince's gaze was drawn instinctively to the central figure of the scene, which was none other than that of Fanny, who, clad in a white wrapper, and with her unbound hair flowing loosely about her, lay prone on the floor with outstretched arms. The missing pistols lay on the carpet beside her.

"Heaven bless my heart! what a very remarkable thing!" ejaculated Uncle Vince, and with that he put down his candle, and going forward, stooped and raised the girl's unconscious form. "She's in a dead faint," he said to Carson, who was close behind him. "Go at once and arouse Mrs. Askew."

That lady was quickly on the spot with restoratives, and before long Fanny opened her eyes and stared around in bewilderment. Uncle Vince patted her on the shoulder.

"You are a very brave girl, my dear," he said; "I think you told me once that you are an officer's daughter; and to you I owe it that the house has not been ransacked. I hope to goodness that you hit the miscreant, and that he will carry your bullet inside him as long as he lives!"

Fanny shuddered and covered her face with her hands.

"But not a word more now," continued the old man. "Cousin Askew, will you conduct Miss Iveson back to her room, while Carson and I take a squint round the premises?" With that he bent and touched Fanny's forehead with his lips and patted her again on the shoulder.

"It's as plain as a pikestaff," said Uncle Vince to his man twenty minutes later. "I can see how it all happened as clearly as if I had been a looker-on. The girl's room is just over this one. She hears a noise for which she can't account. She gets out of bed and listens. She leaves her room and steals downstairs, bringing the pistols with her. Then she opens the door and surprises the scoundrel—maybe there was more than one of them—then she fires, in order to frighten them, and they take

to their heels at once. Oh, I can see it all!"

"As you say, sir, a very brave young lady."

"One in a thousand, Carson; one in a thousand. In the morning we must put the matter into the hands of the police."

Two days later, during which the old gentleman seemed at a loss how to make enough of her, he said to Fanny: "I wish with all my heart, my dear, that you could have spent the winter abroad with me and my cousin; but that is quite out of the question, I suppose!"

"Quite, dear Mr. Vince. On no account can I be spared from home any longer."

Uncle Vince gave vent to a grunt of dissatisfaction. Then, after a brief pause, he said:

"If we must part, there's no help for it, but before we separate you must tell me what I can do for you. Young ladies' heads are said to be stuffed full of whims and wishes of various kinds, so you must let me know what your particular wish or whim is just now, and then let me consider whether I can't help you to its fulfilment. Speak out and don't be afraid."

Fanny's resolve was taken in a moment. There was a low stool close by Uncle Vince's chair on which he sometimes rested his gouty foot. Perching herself on this, she took one of the old man's hands in hers and laid her cheek caressingly against it.

"Dear Mr. Vince," she said, "I have one very special wish, the fulfilment of which rests entirely with yourself."

"Ay, ay, my Bonnybell, and what may that be?"

"That you should become reconciled to your nephew—that you should send for him and tell him you have forgiven whatever he may have done to offend you in the past, and take him again into your favour. Pardon me if I seem over presumptuous, but my woman's instinct tells me that in your heart you still love him as if he were your own son. Let bygones be bygones, and make me happy before I leave you in the knowledge that you have done something which will render you a happier man to the last day of your life!"

Uncle Vince squeezed the hand that was holding his very hard indeed. Three times he cleared his voice before words would come, then he said, speaking somewhat huskily:

"Yours is a strange request, my dear, and had it been made by anybody else they would have had the rough side of my tongue for their pains. But you!—well, I hardly know how to refuse you anything."

I'll think it over—yes, I'll think it over. But he's a sad scamp, that nephew of mine, and how my making things up with him should cause you to feel one whit happier caps me beyond measure. But there! your sex were always riddles to me, and I suppose they always will be."

This happened on Friday. Next morning Pen found the following laconic epistle awaiting his arrival at the office:

"NEPHEW TOM,—Come and dine with me next Sunday. I wish particularly to see you.—Yours as I shall find you,
"TIDCOMBE VINCE."

As a matter of course Miss Iveson and Tom met as strangers, and as such they chatted together while dinner was in progress. Uncle Vince watched them keenly from under his shaggy eyebrows, and now and then, when no one was looking, he chuckled softly to himself. When the meal was over and the ladies had left the room he said: "Draw up your chair, nephew Tom. But first bring that decanter of port from the sideboard; I'll venture on a couple of glasses to-day in spite of my medico's orders."

His manner towards his nephew, while perfectly friendly, lacked the affectionate cordiality of old times, as Pen felt with a pang. Pen began to wonder more and more why his uncle had sent for him. Suddenly, however, with one of his abrupt turns, the latter said:

"And pray, young man, what is your opinion of Miss Iveson?"

Pen felt the hot colour mount to his face, but he answered steadily enough:

"She seems to me in every way charming."

"I am glad to find that for once your views coincide with mine," replied Uncle Vince a little grimly. "But, maybe, you won't think her quite so charming when I tell you that I have come to the conclusion to make her my heir, or rather heiress, vice yourself deposed."

"Oh!" was all that Pen, in the extremity of his amazement, could find to say.

"But it was not altogether to tell you this that I sent for you," resumed his uncle. "I have not forgotten that you are my sister's son, and although you chose to run counter to my wishes on a certain occasion, I am willing to forget and forgive the past on one condition, which is, that you marry Miss Iveson—provided, of course, that she will have you. I see the flutter of a petti-

coat in the garden. Away with you, and come back to me in an hour with your answer one way or the other."

Pen quitted the room like a man in a waking dream. He found his wife in the shrubbery.

"Well, now—well, is it to be yes or no?" demanded his uncle, with an eagerness he could not dissemble, when Pen rejoined him.

"It is to be yes. Miss Iveson and I, I am happy to say, sir, have arranged matters between us to our mutual satisfaction."

"That's good news—that's the best news I've heard for many a day."

"There's only one thing stands in the way, but it's a mere trifle."

"Eh! and what may that be, pray?" darting a suspicious glance at his nephew.

"Merely, sir, that before I can marry again I must contrive, by one means or another, to get rid of my present wife. But, as I said before, that is a detail."

Uncle Vince lay back in his chair and began to turn purple in the face. Pen made a stride forward. Was it possible that he had carried his joke too far? There is no saying what would have happened next had not Fanny, who had been waiting outside, rushed forward on the instant, and going on her knees before Uncle Vince, grasped both his hands in hers.

"Oh, forgive us!" she cried; "not only him, but me! We are already married. I, and no one else, am your nephew Tom's wife. Will you not let me call you uncle?"

By this time Tom was by Fanny's side. Uncle Vince's eyes wandered from one up-turned face to the other, while his mind seemed to be slowly taking in the astounding news just imparted to him. There was a brief space of silence, then lifting his hands and placing one gently on the head of each, he said solemnly:

"I thank Heaven for this!"

But what Uncle Vince never knew was that the bold burglar who broke into Westray House was none other than his scapegrace nephew, that the scheme was concocted and carried out by him, as a last resource, in order to give Fanny a strong claim on the old man's gratitude, and that it was his hand, and not hers, which fired off the pistols before making his escape through the open French window. But Fanny's fainting fit was real enough. At the last moment her over-wrought nerves had given way.

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